God
230
Cam IRes
111758

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY-1.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.

RESPONSIBILITY

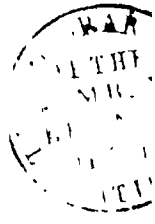
FOR THE

GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.

111758
CC

COMPILED BY PERMISSION OF THE LATE REV. JOHN M'LEOD CAMPBELL, D.D., FROM SERMONS PREACHED CHIEFLY AT ROW, IN THE YEARS 1829-31.

D.d.28.



London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1873.

All rights reserved.

00111758

Printed at the University Press
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE, 55 GLASSFORD STREET,
GLASGOW.

PREFACE.

By a reference to the two volumes of sermons "preached at Row," it will easily be seen that the original form and order of the thoughts which compose this volume have been greatly changed. It has been deemed allowable, in bringing together all which could illustrate a particular line of thought, to omit whatever seemed superfluous, in some instances to rearrange the matter, and to make many verbal changes. Dr. Campbell's family desire that this should be explicitly stated, and that it should be distinctly understood that as there was no opportunity of submitting the work to Dr. Campbell, the compiler alone is responsible for its contents.

About two years ago permission was obtained

from Dr. Campbell to publish a volume of selections from his sermons. He never saw the result; the present volume being in course of preparation at the time of his death. He was, however, apprized of the approaching completion of the work, and a title-page was submitted for his approval. In reference to this Dr. Campbell wrote:—"As to a title-page it must be in accordance with the character of the selections you have made, to give to readers some idea of what they are to expect; and I know that the relation of the Gospel to a future Judgment was an element in my teaching to which the difficulty felt in harmonizing 'Grace' and 'Judgment' gave some prominence, yet my remembrance is more of the attraction felt in the *Grace seen in itself.* But doubtless *this* character also must belong to what you have found most profitable to your own spirit."

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE GROUND OF RESPONSIBILITY AS TO THE RECEPTION OF DIVINE TRUTH,	1
THE MIND OF CHRIST,	13
ETERNAL LIFE,	22
THE WATERS OF LIFE,	31
THE STRAIT GATE,	39
REPENTANCE,	46
CONFESSION,	56
HUMILITY AND CONTRITION,	64
THE ROOT EVIL IN THE HEART OF MAN,	76
THE SECRET ATTRACTION OF UNBELIEF,	85
THE TEACHING OF GOD IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST,	93

PAGE

THE GLORY WHICH IS IN THE NAME OF GOD, . . 110

FAITH AND HOPE, ... 117

INTERCESSORY PRAYER, ... 126

ARE NOT MY WAYS EQUAL? Ezekiel xviii. 29, . . . 141

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE. Jeremiah xvii. 5-8, . 151

AN EXPOSITION. II. Peter i. 5-11, ... 161

AN ESCAPE FROM LOVE. II. Thessalonians iii. 5, . . 184

THE GROUND OF RESPONSIBILITY AS TO THE RECEPTION OF DIVINE TRUTH.

MY friends, I would now speak to you of that responsibility under which you come in consequence of hearing the counsel of God, a responsibility under which all come who hear that counsel, a responsibility which arises out of the very nature of the counsel itself.

It is quite clear that the mere manifestation of power, beyond what we have been acquainted with and can explain, is not enough to command our belief of any doctrine. And it is also clear that in the case of the large proportion of those to whom the Word of God has come, it has not come with any such manifestation of power as would vindicate for it a claim to be from God. And, although we may, by the study of past

history, be able to prove that the words of God when first spoken were accompanied by a manifestation of divine power, yet it is not in this way that we do or can command the faith of our fellow-creatures.

I come declaring a message from God, and say, "*This* is the gospel of your salvation," and you reply, "We are not certain that it is from God, we must take time to inquire into the validity of the record which contains your message and try the witnesses who first vouched for its truth;" it is obvious that if you were *entitled* so to reply, I could not answer, "Nay, but you must at once believe;" and it is also clear that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it would be impossible for you to follow up the inquiry, and to ascertain the actual weight of the external proofs of our message.

My friends, it is another ground altogether which I take with you. I claim that the message of the Gospel should be received by you, not because the book which contains it was written by men to whom God gave witness by signs

and wonders, for this is not the ground of my own great peace in resting, as on a firm rock, on the statements of this book. I claim your faith in that testimony which God has never been without in your own conscience—that testimony concerning sin and holiness, concerning what is due to God and man—the law of which is written on the heart, and which the preached Word does but confirm. It is required of you that you discern, in any Word which professes to be of God, its agreement or disagreement with God's testimony in your conscience; it is required of you, that when God speaks you should believe, *because of what He speaks*, because His glory is *in the truth spoken.*

It is needful that you perceive on what you have to rest *in the last resort*, as to certainty that what you believe is true. Had you ever so many miracles to prove that it comes from God, still, How could you know that God Himself would tell you the truth? Because, you reply, the truth alone is worthy of God. True, therefore you are thrown back upon this, that

unless there be within you something which can give response as to what is worthy of God, God Himself cannot demand of you to believe that which is spoken. Let there be the most irresistible evidence that God is the speaker, still, if I am not otherwise taught that God will never do what is inconsistent with His glory, and that His glory is the glory of truth, the proof that God is the speaker is, to me, no proof that the thing spoken is true. Thus we are still thrown back on the record which God has inscribed on our conscience—a record which no man will dare openly and avowedly to gainsay. It is the evidence contained in the fact that the thing spoken is *worthy of God,* which gives authority in the last resort to the Word, and which leaves the most illiterate without excuse if he does not fall down and worship God as He is set forth in the Gospel. It would be strange indeed if there were no such *impress of God* on *God's truth* as to claim for it that it be received as of God, or if the representation of God in the Word made flesh, which the

record of the Gospel contains, did not by its own glory distinguish itself from counterfeits.

I desire now to consider with you the truth of the Gospel in reference to the glory of God, and your consequent responsibility as to its reception.

The first great truth which the Gospel teaches us is that God is love. My dear friends, it certainly does not need much proof that to say "God is love" gives a higher conception of God's character, than to say that you do not know whether He loves men or not. Is love a good or a bad thing? When you say of any being that he looks on others with a pure desire to bless them, surely you are praising that being. Now, how do you know that love is good? Just because God has written a law on your hearts distinguishing between good and evil. It is written on your hearts that, whether God is good or not, it is a good thing to love. He who wrote this law on your hearts says, This is My law; it is My own heart that I describe in telling you

what you ought to be. When God teaches me that love is good, if He does not also teach me that He is love, He is by the same law teaching me not to love Him. But when He teaches me that love is a good thing, and also says, "I am love," then the law of love is a law *to be what God is*, and the command to love God is according to the law within me to love what is good.

When, therefore, you are told that God is love, you have no excuse for not receiving it, because you know already that love is good. But you reason in your hearts: "If we ultimately perish, is not that a proof that God does *not* love us. God is almighty; if He permits us to perish, is it not a proof that He was willing that we should perish." You go into the history of eternity, and think you find there, in the condition of the lost, an apology for dishonouring thoughts of God! But this is to judge of God's feelings in giving us gifts by the use we make of them. God gives such and such gifts as expressions of His love; and when men have squandered and perverted these gifts, and find

themselves reaping what they have sown, they say, "If we are in this state God does not love us—God never did love us."

Can you indeed stand to this, and before your Judge assert that we are not to measure God's love by what He has done, but *by the consequences of what we have done;* and because, rejecting His love, we are wretched, therefore God did not love us at all? My dear friends, however much you may wish it, you *cannot* soberly believe that ultimate misery will, in any case, be God's fault, and not man's; God has given you a conscience which will testify that if you perish, it is not for lack of love in God.

Again, as to the practical way in which God has testified, in the work of Christ, of the Good and the Evil, see, I pray you, if the glory of God be not in it. The subject of our Lord's humanity—the incarnation of the eternal Word—is not a thing to be looked at from a distance, but a thing you must come near to and look steadily at, if you would truly see the glory of

God in it. To say that God condemns what is wrong is a very different thing from seeing that His heart is really wounded because of wrong. It is *this* you are taught when you see Jesus suffering in our flesh, suffering for our sins, and suffering *from* our sins,—when you see Jesus agonized, not merely *on account of* them, but *by* them. I wish you to see in this work of Christ—viewing His feelings as those of God to man,—how it is fitted to make us know the unknown God—to make us see Him who is invisible, and to make us enter, through the language of a human heart and feeling, into the secrets of the heart of God. There is, in this way of telling all men that God loves them, that which is altogether glorious and worthy of God; and any way of conceiving of Christ's sufferings which would make them other than the reality of love agonized with sin as rebellion against God, has in it no power to prove God's love to us.

The object which God contemplates as the result of the work of Christ is also altogether worthy of Himself. "Behold what manner of

love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The Gospel is given in order that, in real substantial character, you may have the mind of God in you; not for the purpose of giving you safety, but for the purpose of making you partakers of a divine nature—that you may come to know good and evil as God knows them—that you may be capable of seeing, *as from your own knowledge*, that God is good, holy, and righteous. Oh, do not say that you are not to hope for a capacity of understanding love,—that the deep things of God's character are to be unenjoyed by you; and let not your having been sunk to the lowest depths of sin make you deny yourselves to be the objects of a desire in God to raise you up to dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Understand that there is even more glory to God in bringing holiness out of sin, than in bringing holiness out of nothing. Surely if God is glorified in *all* holiness, holiness in those who have been washed in the blood of Christ is that most to the glory of God.

Thus it is evident, that in setting before you the sonship which God has given us in Christ, I am setting before you a condition of the creature which is altogether to the glory of the Creator. Therefore do not think it is giving credit to men to say that God has purified them, sanctified them, glorified them; but understand that I am describing the mighty and all-glorious work of God Himself. And while I tell you that you are the materials on which He desires to work, —that you are to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,—I beseech you to understand that it is God who is to work in you. Oh, let not a false humility persuade you that these are gifts too good for us to receive—that we may be content with something less! Oh, my dear friends! when we think how little we know of God,—how broken a confession of the Cross of Christ we make, and what an unconstrained confession of us Christ is yet to make, we may well be laid low in the dust. But it is well for us to know that He will indeed confess us, and manifest that we are His, on the day of

His appearing, that so we may freely, unconstrainedly—not counting our lives dear unto ourselves—confess Him in the dark day. The trial of faith is exceeding precious,—much more precious than that of gold tried in the fire;—the trial of the power of faith in the name of God to keep us in the midst of darkness.

It is God's name which is at stake. Oh be jealous, be very jealous for it. You are testifying that God is your portion. Oh be as those who *have* a portion. You are testifying that He is light to you in darkness, let it be seen that you dwell in light, and walk "as children of the light and of the day." You are testifying that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, be then cleansed, purged, purified. You are not merely to bear testimony to what God is in Himself, but you are to be yourselves living witnesses that He is able to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

I beseech you to think what a desolate universe it would be if these things were not true. But they are true, they are the faithful

sayings of God. God has made this provision for you, and expects this glory from you. Oh meet the heart of your God, repent and give God glory. Let Him see in you the beauty of holiness, and let Him train you up as sons and daughters to His praise. Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge that God has given you in Christ Jesus the adoption of sons. I speak to you all; to the deaf that they may hear, to the blind that they may see, to the hardened in sin that they may understand. We demand on the part of God that you yield the obedience of faith to God; for we *know* that what we speak to you is not a matter of opinion on which men may safely differ, but that it is that knowledge for lack of which men perish.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

THE mind of Christ is the mind which is to be in us. The wish to secure our own safety therefore cannot rightly be made the ultimate motive of our actions; for *this* could not have been the motive of Christ's actions. How much are the distinctions between good and evil confounded, the moment that the holiness and other features of Christ's character are things which a man desires to find in himself, merely in order that he may be able to feel that he is safe. We are turning things upside down when we make the assurance of our personal safety the thing we are to struggle after, and make holiness, justice, goodness and truth, mere stepping-stones to this safety.

What was the mind which was in Christ?

Christ did not act from any lower motive than perfect delight in God. He declared that it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will. He came forth to reveal—to glorify God; and He testified His perfect delight in God by His perfect willingness to go through all that was needful to this end; and thus He loved the Lord His God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength.

There are two commandments, a first and a second—the second being like the first, and the connection between them being this, that if any man do really love his God as the first requires, then he will be in a condition to love his neighbour as the second requires. That is, if any man hath found his delight in God, he is delivered from selfishness. He desires, in reference to himself, that God may be glorified in him—in reference to his neighbour, that God may be glorified in his neighbour; so his desire for his neighbour is one with his desire for himself.

Christ fulfilled the law, according to the

spirit here described; His desire was that God should be "glorified in Him;" and it was in reference to this He was willing to die; His desire was that God should be glorified in all men, and it was in reference to this that He died for all men. The nature of that will in the Father to which Christ conformed, and by so doing, expressed His love to the Father, and the nature of that love to man which in desiring that God should be glorified Christ cherished, *is what is expressed to us in the work of Christ.*

Christ, in becoming "a curse" for us, recognised the rectitude of the "curse" that was upon us; and testified that sin is righteously charged upon man, and cannot be referred to the circumstances in which God has placed man. He testifies that it is an excellent thing in God to punish sin. If Christ had not seen this to be so, it would not have been part of Christ's love to the Father to make His soul a sacrifice for sin; but by doing this, He made it evident that He recognised the rectitude of the curse

from which, as our Head, He came to deliver us.

Love to man, as a sinner, can never *justly* be a flattering love; accordingly, Christ's love to man is that above all other things which condemns man most. In the highest expression of that love, He put to His seal to the righteousness of the condemnation which was upon all men. By this we are taught what the character of that love was—that it was a desire for our good, which wrought in Him independent of our character and notwithstanding His full knowledge of our demerit; a desire for our good so strong as to cause Him to lay down His life for us. This is our Lord's exposition and illustration of the demand of the law to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Let no person then conceive that the standard set before him is too high, when it is said, Love God as Christ loved God and love your fellow-men as Christ loved men—let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. If this is the requirement of

the apostle, speaking by the Holy Ghost, we must believe that God had previously made provision for our obeying the command. What, then, is the provision He has made? Are our circumstances such that this love to God and man can reasonably be expected from us? This is the provision, that Christ, whose mind we are required to have, *is God's unspeakable* gift TO US. But the great point I wish to fix upon you is, that *personally* you cannot have the mind of Christ, unless you see this mind manifested in a work which has placed you on a footing from which you can look in peace on God's condemnation of sin. So long as you have the great question of your own safety still undecided, and do not know that which gives perfect peace in the presence of God and in the prospect of death, there will be a secret selfish reference in all your desires to have in yourself the fulfilment of God's will. Observe, what is required is that your love to God should be a pure delight in what God is, and that your love to your neighbours should flow out of, and be one

with your love to God, even a sympathy in God's own love to them, a desire that God may be glorified in them, that God's love may be fulfilled in them. Such love to God and man you cannot have whilst the possession of it is desired, if desired at all, as the ground, or at least as the *sign* of your acceptance with God. If my motive in desiring love is that I may have *peace*, then the real desire of my heart is this peace, and in this way love can never come. In point of fact, you cannot love God or your neighbour for the sake of peace; and so the evil is not only that your ultimate end is a selfish one, but the steps are such as you cannot take; the thing is impossible. You *cannot* love from hope of reward or from fear of punishment. You are dishonouring that glorious attribute of love in God, when you desire to possess love only in order to make sure of His favour; and, moreover, while seeking after it in this way and desiring it for this end, you will never obtain it, and cannot have one particle of the mind which was in Christ; you are merely carrying

your selfishness into the concerns of another world—acting for eternity in the same spirit in which you have acted for time. I do not say that it is wrong to desire happiness, or to wish to escape from suffering, but I say that God has called you in Christ to a higher thing, viz., to act upon the motives upon which He Himself acts. There is no sin in acting from the hope of reward, but neither is there any holiness. God has provided some better thing for you, and it is sinful in you not to partake of that better thing. It is sinful in *you* to refuse to be operated upon by any higher motives than those which actuate the lower animals, viz., the fear of pain or hope of pleasure, when you might be actual sharers in God's own holiness and love and peace and blessedness. The intention of God in giving His Son to you, as a Saviour, was that this should be accomplished in you. This purpose has not been accomplished in you who are not dwelling in the light of that love which would transform you into the likeness of Christ. You are indeed as if Christ had never been

given; you are as far from enjoying the love of God as if there had been no love flowing through Jesus Christ to you—and you are *inexcusably* in this evil state. If Christ had not put away sin, if He had not delivered you from the curse of the Law, if He had not the Holy Spirit for you—then you might be judged by the law but the Gospel never could be a condemnation to you, for you could not have been judged on the principle that God had given you eternal life in His Son, and that you had loved darkness rather than light. Since Christ has been given, God's judgment of man turns upon the use he makes of the provision for him in Christ; he will be judged according to his deeds in the body, as those deeds show the results of the Gospel on each man's moral state, but the judgment will be in reference to the gift of God in Christ, and not to the requirements of the law.

God will never confound the distinction between good and evil—a distinction which is eternal and immutable. We are to be judged

according to our works. If by works, as under the law, then must we be all condemned; but if by works, as under grace, then, when God judges, He will separate between those who have received Christ—have entered into life and have turned to godliness, and those who have resisted His love;—between rebels against His grace and those who have received the mind of Christ.

ETERNAL LIFE.

"IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life and the Life was the Light of men."

These words carry back the thought to something that existed before the worlds were—that existed from eternity—that was with the Father and that was in the eternal Word; which thing is that "eternal life" which God is said to have *given* to us. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son."—1 John v. 11.

If people understood these words, "that

eternal life which was with the Father," they would see that whatever this gift of God is, they must be taught of God what it is—that it cannot be anything they could have anticipated, and that therefore all conceptions of it formed and cherished in their natural darkness must be perfectly erroneous. Many questions on the subject of salvation arise from not entering into God's counsel. "The gift of God is eternal life;" that life which was with the Father before the world was; *this* is what God has given to us. When we live, it is with that life which was *the Father's life from all eternity.* These are great words, but not greater than the true meaning of the Holy Ghost. Wherein is the life of any Being? It is that out of which the enjoyment of that Being arises. The "eternal life" in God, therefore, is that in God Himself which makes Him blessed. God's blessedness must have a cause. It must spring from what He is; and the "eternal life" which was "with the Father" is that thing in God which makes God infinitely blessed.

Do not imagine it too bold to enter on this ground, and to consider wherein God's blessedness consists. It is not forbidden ground to those who are intended to be partakers of a Divine nature—"to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,"—to those whose peace is said to be "the peace of God which passeth all understanding,"—to those concerning whose joy it is said, that "their joy is the joy of the Lord, that they drink of the river of God's own pleasures and are filled with the fatness of God's own house." When I speak of "eternal life," I mean nothing else than that life which is in God, and which makes God to be infinitely blessed; and when God declares that He has *given* us eternal life, I understand Him as meaning nothing less than that He gives us a participation in that life which He has had from all eternity. And the whole history of the Incarnation of the Son of God has its explanation in this, as the great purpose which God had in view.

They can little understand that Christ is

in truth very God as truly as He is man and that His people are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, whose notions of salvation are those of mere safety—deliverance from penalties—being happy. God might have made us happy and given us safety in some other way, but safety and happiness do not amount to this gift. The birds of the air and the beasts of the field have a happiness which God has given them; but to say that God gives man eternal life is to say that God gives man to partake of that which is His own blessedness. It is to say that God has made provision for our having in us the feelings He has—for our loving what He loves—for our hating what He hates—for our being holy as He is holy—for our entering into a state of perfect sympathy with Him, and becoming one with Him in blessedness by becoming one with Him in character. In Christ God has thus blessed man; He has given to man a participation of His own nature, and thus a participation in all that springs from the possession of such a nature.

"And this life is in His Son." If you understand what "eternal life" is, you will be prepared for knowing how this life is contained in Christ. If it be declared that there is life for me in Christ, this must mean that there is enough in Christ to enable me to live the life of God. It is not merely that Christ is a ground of confidence for me,—one to whom I may commit myself and feel safe,—but that there is *that* in Christ which will sustain in me a spiritual and divine life.

Christ says of Himself, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *hath* everlasting life." Observe, there is *life* in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, because the holiness, love, righteousness, truth, goodness, and mercy, which were in God from all eternity, are now contained in manifestation in this body and blood; so that any person who (spiritually) understands what was revealed in the body and blood of Christ, is in the participation of God's holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness, mercy, and love.

The man who knows the history of the atone-

ment, has learned from that work of God what is meant by saying that God is love. Love is a feeling cherished towards a being; and if we would know what that feeling in God is, we may see it working in the life of Christ; so that, looking at His life, we learn what the love of God is. Creation could not fully manifest the love of God. It was love in God which moved Him to create; but the pure, unselfish character of love could not have been known, unless God had been seen loving His enemies, with a love which, even *while their enmity continues*, is flowing out towards them, and desires to bring them from their evil state back to Himself, and to bless them with Himself.

Love and holiness are words used in the Bible to convey to us the full conception of the character of God; and it is in receiving them in that distinction in which they are thus used that we shall come to know God's full character. It is very important that we should see in the Atonement a pure condemnation of evil *as it is in itself*. If we do not see this in it, we see nothing,—we

remain in ignorance of the true God, for we have not been taught to understand the nature of His holy hatred of sin.

A proud man has a distinct aversion to everything that makes light of his authority, and we might conceive of God's hatred to sin as of this kind. But mark the different apprehension which the Atonement teaches us: from it we learn that God hates the evil thing *as it is in itself;* not that it produces in Him any ill-will to the sinner, or any feeling of revenge, or that His dignity, so to speak, is hurt by it; for there is no such thing in God. I know when such words are used, you are ready to say, Who would conceive thus of God? Oh! you do not know your own hearts. It has been said that revenge is so sweet a morsel that the gods keep it to themselves! In this the heart of man speaks out—conceiving of God as altogether such a one as himself. But the fact of Christ's suffering for me, in order that the curse due to my sins might not rest upon me, the sinner, teaches (when I see that Christ is God) that the

curse did not spring from a spirit of revenge in God, but from a pure condemnation of sin, and a feeling as free from selfishness as love itself.

It is said that God has given to us—to *all*—eternal life; to *all*, for God calls on every man to believe it concerning himself; ("*us*" in my mouth, speaking as God's ambassador to my fellow-men, means myself and those to whom I speak.)

But it is sometimes asked, "How can it be that all men have eternal life in Christ, when it is written, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life?" We see that in Christ are all things pertaining to life and godliness, so that to him who *has* Christ there is no lack; he who can say Christ is mine, has all things; but this is the difficulty; how can a man say that Christ is his?" When God says of Christ that He is a Mediator He means that there is in Christ all that is necessary for our approach to God, whatever barrier sin may have interposed. But were it according to the truth of God to

hold, that a person might know all that is contained in Christ and yet have occasion to say, "All this provision is desirable and lovely, but how am I to make it my own?"—in that case the space between man and God would still be impassable; we should see God brought near in Christ, but Christ Himself still at some distance from us. Christ would not be enough, some additional Mediator would be required; for the difficulty of getting at the provision which is in Christ would still keep us far from God. But Christ is not far off; the question is needless, How hath any man the Son,—How does Christ enter into any man? Believing the truth concerning Christ we have Christ in us; for it is written, "he that believeth hath life," as well as "he who hath the Son hath life." These two are but different statements of the same fact.

THE WATERS OF LIFE.

THE "Waters" of life offered by the Prophet in the name of his God to men who were spending their labour for that which could not satisfy them, are, he assures them, got without money and without price. They are to be enjoyed, that is, in a way of knowledge, not in a way of labour. "*Hearken and eat;*" as much as to say, in hearkening to me you will eat that which is good—"*Hear*, and your soul shall live." There is a constant tendency to come to God with money and with price,—to try to do something to distinguish ourselves from others, and to put ourselves out of the common state of mankind; and when in this spirit men peruse the words of the Holy Ghost, instead of encouraging words, they make them discouraging. Thus, when it

is said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," I have heard people reply, Yes, but I must *come:* if I do not come, I shall not get the rest. The intention of God is to fix our attention on the person to whom we are to come, "Come unto *Me*," but in a self-righteous state we fix our thoughts on the word *come:* and we suppose at once, this must be the money, this must be the price, and get into difficulties as to the way in which we should come.

The Holy Ghost has used a variety of expressions in order to prevent this error, and yet men will fall into it. In one place it is *Come;* but, in another place it is said *Look;* in another *Believe;* in another *Hear;* all to prevent our thoughts from resting on the act of our own mind, and to fix our attention on the *object* presented, which is Jesus Christ. Had it been any other subject but that of salvation, people would have committed no mistake about it. If I had said, "Hear! I have good news for you," you would never have asked, how am I

to hear? If I had said, "Look, and you will be rejoiced at what you see," you would never have asked, how am I to look. If I had said, "Believe, and you will find it much to your profit," you would merely have considered whether what I said was true, without turning your attention to the act of believing. Why is it that when such expressions are used in religion, people's attention is turned away from *the thing* spoken of, *to themselves?* Just because men would turn the act of hearing, believing, looking (which is a bare receiving from God), into the money and the price by which to purchase what God gives. But the news which God sends you—like every other piece of news—is to put you in the attitude of a listener, and not to put you in the attitude of doing something; when God invites the children of men to drink of the waters of life, He is just inviting them to hear what He has to tell them. When God says, I give you "life"—"eternal life," the very expression should make you pause and consider, Does "eternal life" mean nothing more than

pardon, or safety, or escape from hell, or being happy when I leave this world?

We are brought, by the very words used, to this, that we must listen as little children—with the feeling that we have to be taught *what the gift is.* Of myself I do not know what eternal life means; I must therefore listen to God. "The life was manifested," says St. John, "and we have seen it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father." Now, we learn from this, that what God gives in giving "life" is something which was with God before the worlds were made; and thus it is obvious that this "life" is not anything of which you could have had—before it was "manifested"—the most distant conception. God's gift is His own communicated life; not the life of mere happiness, such as the birds of the air or the beasts of the field have, but God's *own* life. It is nothing less than the impartation of the Divine nature, so that we may be, as it is written, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." To be an "heir of God" is to have

the germ of God's own character; we may enjoy God's gifts without possessing His life, but we cannot enjoy God Himself without having His mind in us. I cannot rejoice in God's holiness without being holy, or in God's love unless I love, or in God's truth unless I am true. When God speaks of making us "heirs," the meaning is that He imparts to us a divine nature, so that we may enjoy what He *is*. This is what God calls "life." This is the thing contemplated, when He says by the prophet, "Come to the waters." *These are the waters;* something in drinking of which we shall be partakers of a divine nature, and be made sharers in God's own blessedness.

The "life" of God, as life in man, was manifested in that of Christ; that is to say, God's eternal love and holiness and power and truth are taken out of that unrevealed condition in which they were before the worlds were made, and put into the blood-shedding of Christ, where they are all expressed. We there see Christ dying for His enemies—pouring out His

life for them. The love of God is manifested in that Christ died for us. The holiness of God is manifested in that nothing else than the blood of Christ could sanctify us to the service of God.

But there is more than this in the blood-shedding of Christ. It is not only the means of God's character being unveiled, but of man's sin being forgiven. God is not now imputing sin to us. The word is, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto men their sins." The glory which was in the Cross is intended to impart to us the character which we look at—that looking at it, and being made like it, we should live. I cannot look on this manifestation of the Holy One without fear and trembling; I cannot *really* look on it at all, unless I see that it has put away my sins. It is because I see that the work of Christ has put away my sin, that I can look at the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus, and calmly and deliberately learn and weigh its meaning.

But it is not enough that I am delivered

from the inquiry, "What must I do to get the pardon of my sins?" I require to have a power, a capacity, a strength, in which to enter into the deep things of God. And this farther thing is contained for me in the work of Christ. He ascended up on high, and received gifts for the rebellious. The first of these gifts is the Holy Ghost. If in Christ I have the Spirit, then, though of myself I cannot discover and receive the manifested glory, yet in Christ's Spirit I can. This is the office of the Spirit—to take of the things of Christ, and show them to us—*to sustain us in the vision of what Christ is.* When the Spirit of Christ is revealing the glory of Christ in us, *Christ lives in us.* By the work of Christ we are all placed in a condition to be influenced by the same motives which influenced Him—to be of the same mind with Him.

My dear friends, Can you individually say of what you have now heard, "I know it is God's plan, because I find it taking effect in me; I do find all things pertaining to life and godliness

in Christ Jesus; I am made a sharer in a Divine nature?" If not, you are not fit to be confessors of Christ before men; you are not of the family of which Christ Jesus is the elder brother. You may be earnest, serious, painstaking people, but you have not in you the mind of Christ—God's plan has not yet met with its accomplishment in you.

ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

OUR Saviour is not here to be understood as having any other meaning than He elsewhere has in preaching the Gospel. He must be understood as meaning the same thing as when He says,—"Repent;" or, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness;" or, as when He says, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" or, as when He said by the mouth of the Prophet, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." All Christ's annunciations of the way of life, if rightly understood, will be found to be the unchanging annunciation of the one everlasting Gospel.

And what is this gate and this way? Christ Himself must be both the gate and the way, for

He says, "I am the door;" and, also, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "*By Me*," He says again, "if any man enter in, he shall find pasture." "*Through Him*," says the Apostle, "we have access unto the Father;" and again, "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way*."

And how is Christ both the gate and the way? He has removed the barrier between us and God, but He has done more than this,—He has taken the place of what He removed and has thus become a "way"—a living way—to the Father; not merely an *open* way, but a *living* way. In calling Him a living way, I refer to His character as the risen Saviour, who has ascended up on high, and who is now the Dispenser of the Spirit, that in the Spirit we may worship God; I refer to the second part of His work, His work *now*, as it is set forth in Ephesians, chap. ii. from the 14th verse, "He has abolished in His flesh the enmity."

My dear friends, if the "enmity" here spoken of was not slain by the death of Christ, it never will be slain. His work was not a preparation for slaying the enmity, it was the actual slaying it; it was not a preparation for making peace, but the actual making of peace. Having *made* peace, He *preached* it. And Christ is not merely one who has made the way open and clear, He is the *living* way; not like a *road* to be *walked on*, but *a power* to bear one along. He is not merely one in the *thought* of whom I can come to God, but He is also one in whose *strength* I can come; He is one who can give me power to come to God.

The command, "Enter ye by the strait gate," is just as if it were said, "Go to God through Him who has put away your condemnation; go to God through Him who has the Spirit for you." It is not, Go to God *for* a Mediator, *for* a Saviour; it is, that God, *having given you* a Mediator, you are to "enter in" through Him. The command is, Go to God through Christ. Mark the unconditional character of the gift of

Christ implied in this command. To tell a person to enter in by this gate, if he supposes that there is something for him to do before he can know that Christ is his, will be, in his estimation, to address to him a premature command, for he thinks that he must first "appropriate" Christ—make the gate his own—and after that, enter. But, is not the command "Enter in" the same thing as saying, "You have nothing to do *but* to enter in?" Is it not just saying "Enter in *at once*."

People readily say, "There is no ground of confidence but Christ,"—and God forbid they should think otherwise,—*but we do not find them entering.* They know not of what they speak, and the simplicity that is in Christ—the cross revealed—remains a stumblingblock to them.

Now, who does obey the command to "enter in?" Only the person who *is entering;* only he who is actually worshipping God in the Spirit through Christ.

When you tell men that they cannot worship God, and at the same time command them to

worship, you seem to them to utter a contradiction—to call them to enter in at a shut gate; and though you tell them of strength in Christ, you still do not seem to them to open the gate. If a man understood what is meant when it is said that God alone worketh, he would see that to tell him that in Christ's strength he can do all things, is to open the gate; and he would not only see the gate to be open, but that it is the only gate by which man *can* enter. If a man knew himself, and understood *what it is* to worship and serve God, he would say,—Unless you can tell me that Christ will do everything in me you need not speak to me at all. If you think I can do it, I can only say,—All the thoughts of my heart are only evil continually; I have examined my purposes of obedience, and find they are all rottenness; and therefore unless you can tell me of some strength other than my own, I must remain as I am.

This is the language of one who knows himself; let him go on to listen to the voice which says, Lean upon me, I am the Lord thy strength,

the living way, a road which has life and strength for thee; let him hear Christ saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and let his heart answer with St. Paul, "Then I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

My dear friends, in the name of the Lord I call upon you to walk in this narrow way; so only will you be strong and able for duty. The ordinary duties of life, *properly done*, imply obedience to the command, "Enter in at the strait gate." It is a very easy thing for a man to relieve another's wants; but to do it *as Christ would have done it, to have the mind of Christ in doing it*, this is the straitness. The path is the same as the gate, it is continually a narrow path; because it has no fence to hinder your going to the right or the left, there is always need for the exhortation to *keep the one line*, and there is a "straitness" felt in so doing because of our continual tendency to go to the right or the left. But this way, strait as it is, leadeth unto life; and not only so, but *in it there is life.* We do not only say to you, If you could

see the end of the way you would see life and eternal blessedness (though this is true); but we say, Walk in this way for it is life *now*. *Now*, there is *in* the keeping of God's commandments an exceeding great reward, not *for* nor *after*, but *in the* keeping of them. "Because I seek Thy precept," the Psalmist says, "I walk at liberty."

I beseech you therefore hear the voice calling on you to enter in at the "strait gate" and to walk in the way of life, hear the voice which says not "make preparations for going in," but "Enter, come and be saved; come and find rest."

REPENTANCE.

REPENTANCE is a change of mind towards God; it is the change which takes place when one who has been in a state of alienation from God comes into a state of reconciledness to Him; and this change our Lord has told us is essential to salvation. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

God will never bless the sinner *in his sins;* and, therefore, to be blessed we must be brought *from our sins.* Yonder is the region of enmity and rebellion, on this side is the region of those who are reconciled, and God declares a blessing to rest on this region, and a curse to rest on yonder region. How can happiness be communicated to those who are yonder in the region of rebellion? Shall God take the blessedness

which has hitherto been limited to the one side, and send it to those who are on the other side? or shall He bring them back from the region of enmity and the curse, to that of reconciledness and blessing? The latter is God's way. This is the amount of the statement, Except ye repent ye shall all perish.

Repentance being thus indispensable, let us consider what it is,—what takes place when one who has been making flesh his arm comes to trust in God. Repentance is not a middle point between the right state and the wrong; there is no standing-ground between the two states of mind. It is important to mark this, because things are often understood to be implied in repentance which are only true concerning it if we include the feeling *into which* the person turns.

The state of mind into which the sinner is called to come is just this, that God should occupy in his heart that place which self naturally does; that all separate individual personal interests should be swallowed up in the interest of God's great plan; that all taking of credit or of praise,

all seeking of distinction for self, should give place to the acknowledgment of God,—that the strong man should not glory in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches, nor the wise man in his wisdom, but that "he who glorieth should glory in the Lord, who exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth." This is the condition of one who has repented, that without any effort—as the free working of his own mind—he gives to God that place which self occupied before.

My friends, you have been accustomed to associate repentance with sorrow, and you may well do so—it is a right association. Perhaps you are not so accustomed to associate it with joy, but the association is equally true and right. No one will have any difficulty in acknowledging it to be a sorrowful thing. He who repents is now giving to God the place God *always* ought to have had in his heart; it is impossible that any one should have God reigning within him, without deeply feeling the evil of the condition from which he is turned, and this he cannot do

without sorrow. No one can be conscious that it is a new thing for him to give his heart to God; that up to the very moment of his doing this he had been as a god to himself, and not be *stung* with the feeling that it has been so: and thus repentance necessarily includes a holy sorrow for sin; a *godly* sorrow, a sorrow springing from his being godly, springing from God being his God. But if the sorrow be godly, it must be a sorrow connected with joy. The very conception of godliness implies it. To separate joy from godliness would be to deny this first principle of all religion, that *in the keeping* of God's commandments there is great reward. No one who sympathizes with the mind of God can conceive of repentance as separated from joy, or of turning to God as not being a most joyful thing. The glory of God is involved in this.

The Gospel is the annunciation to sinners of a goodness in God *leading* to repentance. It declares a present love in God to the sinner, which would not only have him back again, but

which has given him all things needful to enable him to return.

If a man must repent before he is entitled to say "God loves me," "Christ died for me," then no man can repent. The apostle says of the law that it is *weak* through sin. Man *ought* to love God, but while under a feeling of condemnation he *cannot* love; the right of God to the love of His creatures is the right of the law, which it can demand, but cannot possibly receive. But when God comes to us in the Gospel saying, Repent, it is implied that He has changed our circumstances, so that it is now *possible* to repent. He has removed the barrier: there is nothing to prevent our coming to Him with perfect confidence; in the gift of Christ every needful title is conferred.

When a person thinks he must have repentance and love in himself, before he can rejoice in God; when he thinks he must be holy before he is entitled to rejoice, he is under an entire misconception, seeing that rejoicing in God *is* holiness. Coming to God *is* the righteous state of man. The righteous man is not one who has a *right* to

trust God, but one who *is actually trusting* in Him; and the wicked man is not one who has no right to trust in God, but one who ought to trust and is not trusting.

And now, my dear friends, seeing that it is impossible to repent without that knowledge of God which puts us in a condition to rejoice in Him, how has it come to pass that men seek for repentance before this knowledge? The fact is undeniable that God has been understood to say, Repent, and when you know that you have repented, *then* you may be assured of My forgiveness and My love. I know that men will say they claim no merit for their repentance, but we have to do with facts, not with words; it matters not whether a man says he takes credit to himself or not; if it be from something in himself that he gathers the assurance of God's love to him, it is contrary to the principle of the Gospel. People get rid of this by saying repentance is the work of the Spirit, therefore there is no merit in it. But how does the Spirit work? Am I made holy *without the truth or by the truth?*

Am I made holy first and then shown that Christ is mine, or does the Spirit shew me Christ as mine, and *thereby* make me holy?

But men say, 'if we know our sins are forgiven what is the use of repentance?' I have been labouring to show you that a man *cannot* repent unless he knows that his sins are forgiven; let me now show you the radical misconception which such a question implies. It implies that the only value of turning from sin to God is that we shall thus obtain forgiveness; that if God so loved me as to give His Son to die for me I need not be sorry for having sinned against Him and grieved Him; that because I am at liberty to return as a child to a Father I may remain at a distance. According to this, forgiveness—the chief value of which is that it leads to repentance—is itself the great object; and delight in God, conformity of character to Him, all the change from darkness to light,—these have no value but as grounds of forgiveness. Oh, it makes the heart bleed that knows anything of the loveliness of holiness, anything of God's character,

anything of Him who is the chief among ten thousand, to hear people ask, 'why should I repent if God has forgiven me?' What has ever made any one grieve over his sin, but just that he has found the love of that God who has blotted out his sins? Suppose a son banished for his offences from his father's house, and I come saying 'I have good news for you, your father freely forgives you and invites you home, would he say, 'If my father forgives me I need not be sorry for having displeased him:' 'if he invites me to return I may stay where I am?' But suppose I say, 'Your father has not forgiven you, but if you repent, if you begin to love him, he will forgive you'—could he repent? Could he begin to love? He might *do* many things, but would not everything he did to win back his father's favour have a selfish reference to his own advantage?

Repentance is not a selfish thing. I do not say there is any sin in desiring to obtain happiness or to escape misery; but I say decidedly there is no holiness in it. There is no

holiness in desiring to get to heaven or to escape from hell, just as there is no sin, but neither is there any holiness, in a drowning man trying to swim ashore. It is a mere instinctive feeling. And though the desire for safety is not in itself sin, yet, passing for holiness as it does, it comes to be a very great evil. When a man measures his holiness by his desire to escape from hell and to get to heaven, and regards his anxiety to have an interest in Christ as a proof of holiness, he is under a terrible delusion. God our Creator, knowing our frame, has considered that it is natural that we should wish to escape from misery and seek for happiness; that so long as the question of our own safety is a doubtful one it is impossible that we should not be working for the sake of this safety; and therefore, desiring that we should be holy, that we should act from higher motives, He has given us Christ, and shewn us enough in Christ on which to rest in perfect peace. He has thus set us at liberty to love Him; He has said, 'I have taken away the necessity of your working for a piece of

bread; what remains but that you love and serve me as a son does a father?' It is because God has done this that the word has gone forth, Repent.

Is it then unreasonable to ask, Have you repented? or to expect that he who has repented should know that he has? Yet it is sometimes thought a right and humble thing not to know. I beseech you to consider what you are doing under cover of that word humility. I beseech you, be no longer found blending light and darkness: remember that however this uncertainty may suit the purposes of the kingdom of darkness, it never can be according to the principles of the kingdom of light. To be saved implies a change of character and also a partaking in the joys God confers on His children; to perish implies abiding in a state of sin and of darkness. It is casting obscurity on the whole character of sin and holiness when men so confound them as to dream that all *may be well,* though they are quite uncertain whether they have, or have not, repented unto life.

CONFESSION.

THE natural conscience of every man is sufficient to convince him of the fact that he does many things which he ought not to do, and that in all things he offends; but the Spirit of God in men will alone cause them to confess sin truly, because it is one thing to admit the fact that we are not what we ought to be; and another thing to admit *the sin* of this fact, the guilt which lies at our own door. It is one thing to say that we are in an evil state, and another thing to refer that state to ourselves personally; to feel that it is altogether of ourselves, that there is no excuse to be found for it, that in respect of it we are altogether guilty; and really to feel the righteousness of God's condemnation of that state. This last alone is confessing sin. It is

not confessing sin to admit the fact that it is an evil state; that sin is a base thing; that when you contrast a holy state with an evil state, the holy state is the best. To confess sin is to come to the conclusion in your heart, and freely with your lips to make the admission, that your breach of God's law and your not loving God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and your not loving your neighbour as yourself, are *justly charged against you as your guilt;* in respect of which neither the force of example, nor the influence of education, nor circumstances, nor a corrupted nature, furnish any adequate apology. To confess sin is to take God's word in the matter, to stand on God's side in the question; it is to join God against myself, and to feel that the fact that this sin is *my* sin, that this corruption is *my* corruption, does in no respect interfere with the sternness with which I recognize that sin is a thing for which the guilty person is righteously held responsible.

My dear friends, you know well that so far is the condition of joining God in condemning our-

selves from being the natural condition of man, that instead of this, it is the fact that whenever any thing is charged upon you as in itself evil, the first movement of your mind is to look about for an excuse. Every one who looks into his own heart knows well that this is its tendency; and that in comparing ourselves with others, and in considering our circumstances, our trials and our temptations, we in general do not find it difficult to discover excuses for ourselves. It is seen to be so, from the language of men when they speak as if injustice were done them by the opinion of others, and when they speak of their conduct appearing worse to others than it would appear if people knew all the circumstances, and when they say that their hearts and their motives are right though their actions do not come up to what others expect from them. In all this they shew that they have not yet been taught to *confess sin;* that they have not yet been brought to stand on God's side and condemn their sin as truly and unhesitatingly as God condemns it.

You are accustomed to hear me teach that

through the shedding of the blood of Christ the sins of all have been forgiven; that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.* You are thus accustomed to hear of a forgiveness which embraces all men and extends to all; and you have often heard me refer our enjoyment of God's ordinary benefits, of the bounties of His providence, of the air of heaven, of the light of the sun, of the food we eat and of the raiment wherewith we are clothed, to this forgiveness. I have always sought to set forth to you that the fact of a sinful creature receiving any expression of kindness at the hand of a holy God while that creature is still in his sins, implies an atonement for the sin of that creature; it being altogether inconsistent with the holiness of God that His goodness should come forth on creatures in a state of sin, if there had been no atonement made for sin. Were it otherwise, God's unchanging and eternal distinction between good and evil would be liable to be lost sight of and forgotten; the blood of Christ is that which

explains and casts light upon all the previous witness for God given in the rain and fruitful seasons.

I desire to refresh your memories with this truth now, because I am going to set before you something which is *not* the forgiveness extending to all, but is the personal enjoyment of that forgiveness by the individual. *If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* That you may see the harmony between the two declarations, I would place before you what I conceive to be the real history of the fact, under the figure of the dealings of a father with a prodigal son. Suppose there were two fathers, each of whom had a prodigal son; and that the one father sent this message to his son, 'I am grieved and offended at your conduct, I have shewn you much kindness, but you have broken my heart; wherefore I disinherit you, let me never see your face again:' whilst the other sent this message, 'You have grieved me, you have broken my heart, you have made me restless and sorrowful; yet return and dwell with me as a son, you will

find my fatherly heart as warm towards you as ever.' Would you not say that there was a difference between these two fathers; that the one was relentless and would not forgive his son, whilst the compassion of the other was kindled within him, so that he did forgive? Just such is the difference between the mind which men in their blindness have ascribed to God, and 'that which is really God's mind as expressed in the work of Christ; *this* is the forgiveness extended to all His prodigal sons in this day of grace. To none has God said 'I banish you from my presence;' to all He says 'Return to me as dear children: be my heirs; possess the inheritance of children." This is a real substantial forgiveness, independent of all returning. The word of God might have been 'Depart; you will find no access to me, no space for repentance, though you should seek it carefully with tears.' The difference between saying 'Depart, thou cursed one' and 'Come back and dwell with me as a child'—this mighty difference is the 'pardon' which we preach to all; and let

no man make light of this difference—of this mighty boon. The error which I wish to guard you against is that of supposing that there is some barrier, some hindrance, something which is to be removed by your repentance or your faith or your tears; that there is yet unkindled in the heart of God any personal love to you as an individual, and that something is to be done in you in order to awaken it. I desire to guard you against the error of imagining that circumstances will ever be more favourable for your enjoying God's love than they are at this very moment. Yet I beseech you not to make light of the difference between the state of the person who has returned and that of him who has not. There is a difference in the circumstances of one who is welcome to return and those of one who has no invitation; but there is another difference, and a most important one, amongst those to whom the invitation is addressed. There is a welcome home which can never be enjoyed in the far country; there is a consciousness of God's favour which

cannot be had away from God; a pronouncing of us righteous, a freeing us from condemnation, which cannot be had while we are putting from us God's grace. St. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation *to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*," which clearly implies that there *is* condemnation to all who do not so walk. What is this condemnation? It has respect to the condition of grace in which God has placed us. It refers to the distinction between those who are disappointing and those who are meeting God's wishes; between those with whom God is grieved as rejecting His grace, and those over whom He is rejoicing as receiving His grace. It is the distinction between those in whom God sees a mighty love fulfilling its object, and those in whom He sees it failing of its object—the heart beating back all the love of God that is flowing to it, as the rock beats back the wave that dashes against it.

HUMILITY AND CONTRITION.

WHAT is involved in humility, or what is it to say that a man is humble? It is just to say that he takes his own place in regard to God; that he is contented to be nothing, and to see God to be all in all: this is humility. Observe, there are two things here: that I should *know* my nothingness, and that *I should be contented with* my nothingness. And when am I contented to be nothing? Just when, knowing that in God's sight I *am* nothing, I see that in God which makes me satisfied with my dependence on Him. Let me be in this condition of knowing concerning God that which reconciles me to my dependence, and what will be the result? I shall delight in the thought of God; I shall find my happiness in becoming more

and more acquainted with Him; I shall search after the knowledge of God as after hidden treasure, and welcome every discovery of God and of His glory.

Now you see that if a person is in this state, it is natural that God should dwell with him, and he with God. It is possible and likely. But humility on this earth must take a peculiar character from the circumstances of those in whom it exists; and that character is expressed by the word *contrition.* Every angel in heaven is humble: but contrition has reference to sin, and to the feeling that I am not only *nothing*, but worse than nothing. There is nothing bad in being nothing; but there is something bad in having forgotten my nothingness, in having fancied myself something, in having given place to pride, and in having become a god to myself. *This is sin.* Therefore humility in man never can come alone; never merely in the way of feeling 'I am nothing, and I am contented to be nothing.' There cannot be in a man the knowledge of his nothingness without a sense of

contrast between this nothingness and his natural desire to be something. Contrition—the deep consciousness of unworthiness, of great evil as my own, of great sin as the just charge of God against me—is that which puts the sorrowful ingredient into humility. Humility as the condition of a sinner cannot exist without sorrow, sorrow for the sin which he has committed against God.

The contrite sinner is one who takes to himself the full condemnation of sin and does not diminish it one jot. He looks on the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of his iniquity; and makes no effort to make it appear less than it is, or to form a lower estimate of his guilt than is according to God's own estimate of it. He is a man who would give up the keys of his heart, and invite God to search, as with candles, its inmost recesses in order that all the evil that is in him may be discovered. One who can thus welcome God may dwell with God, and God is glorified in dwelling with the contrite one.

But how is it that any child of Adam can become a humble and a contrite one? How can I, a sinner, be made content with my dependence on God, and how can I help shrinking from the full acknowledgment of my sin? What is the provision God has made for producing in man humility and contrition? This is the provision: He proclaims "Peace, peace, to him that is afar off and to him that is near." The same thing is stated more distinctly and fully in the Epistle to the Ephesians ii. 13-18. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh. For

through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

In what sense is Christ said to have made peace before He preached it? Observe these words, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Taking these as the key to the whole passage, we find that the making of peace was the producing a state of things in which men have access through Christ by the Spirit unto the Father, and that the preaching of peace is the announcing of this state of things.

Thus then we learn, that the peace which Christ made, was the opening up a way of access for sinners to come to God. This is peace; and is spoken of as peace, because it is the removing of the hindrance which existed to our being upon the side of God; it is the putting us in circumstances in which, in respect of God, there is no hindrance to our glorifying and enjoying Him. It is not the announcement that man is now, in his own heart and feelings, at peace with God, for this would not be always true; it

is to be understood as implying that, *on God's part*, Christ has put away the barrier to communion with God which sin had created.

My dear friends, endeavour to realize that sin makes it inconsistent with God's righteousness to admit you into fellowship with Him; that, as sinners, you must necessarily be excluded from His presence, and from all enjoyment in Him; that you cannot come to Him, seeing He cannot receive you. We are so accustomed to feel as if we might come to God, that we have to be taught that, in respect of our condition as sinners, there is a barrier; that, as sinners, we have neither title nor power to come to Him; but, let this be distinctly conceived of, and then let what is wanting be conceived of. If it be true that God is the fountain of life—that all true happiness springs from communion and fellowship with Him—and that our own circumstances exclude us from these, what does One do for us who takes away the barrier, and takes it away so effectually that it shall be true not only that we *may* come to God, but that we *have*

strength in which to come? It is clear that the benefit conferred corresponds with the evil removed; and that now, whatever there is in God as a fountain of life for His creatures becomes free to us. This removal of the barrier is otherwise expressed as the peace which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. When Christ shed His precious blood as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; when He thus made atonement for our guilt, and took away our condemnation; when He led captivity captive, and ascended up on high and received gifts for the rebellious,—then was this peace made. From the moment that the removal of the "condemnation" which excluded men from coming to God was declared by the fact of the Resurrection, from *that* moment it might be said that we had "access by one Spirit unto the Father," and that henceforth nothing, except ignorance of the fact that Christ has made this peace, could stand between any individual of the human race and his living in the enjoyment of all those things which pertain to life and godliness.

Observe that God, in the acceptance of the holy offering of Christ, did remove *absolutely, unconditionally,* without waiting for us to say whether we desired it or not, the barrier between Himself and us; and that He also gave to us Christ, on the ground of whose work the barrier was removed, to be to us a living way of access, having the Spirit for us to that end; so that He is revealed to us, as one in whose strength we can draw near to that God to whom we are free to come.

These are the facts concerning the work of Christ for all,—for every human being. The humble and the contrite man is the man who *knows these facts.*

In the knowledge of this peace which Christ has made, there is enough to make any child of Adam humble. As to our nothingness, the fact that a man has nothing at all to do in this great work of removing the sentence of exclusion and bringing himself into the condition of having free access to God—that this has been entirely the work of God in Christ—is enough to

teach it. It is impossible for any man to see what the history of this work is, and to think of meddling with the matter, or having any share in the work. But humility consists, not only in knowing our nothingness, but in being contented therewith. The person whom I expect to be satisfied with his dependence upon God and to rejoice in it, is he who *knows* that God has so loved him as to give His own Son to die for his sins; and who knows that this love has not been powerless, has not been merely a great but an effectual love; a love that has provided all which he needs, seeing that Christ hath the Spirit for him.

What then is there to prevent his rejoicing in his dependence, when he has such a knowledge of God's heart towards him and of the provision made for him? He alone who knows these things *can* rejoice in dependence on God; for though people are apt to ask, 'How could anyone desire to be in better hands than in God's?' yet no man can see *that* in the present mind of God towards him which can cause him

confidently to commit himself to God, except so far as he sees that God has given him Christ, and, in Him, all things pertaining to life and godliness. And as a man cannot be humble apart from the gift of Christ, so neither can he be contrite. He who does not know that peace has been made by Christ can never look his sins fully in the face, but has a continual inducement to make light of sin and to make out that it is not so evil a thing to be a sinner.

How then comes it to pass that humility and contrition are so often demanded as pre-requisites before which there can be no warrant to say 'Christ died for me, Christ has the Spirit for me?' It comes to pass in this way: God has written a law upon men's consciences, which remains after it has ceased to be written upon their hearts. God's intention in the Gospel is to re-write the law upon the heart. But the law in the conscience says 'thou shalt be humble, thou shalt be contrite,' while the proud heart still refuses to be so. How shall the proud heart, and the conscience recognising the law, be made to

agree? There are but two ways in which this agreement can take place: the one is by making the heart really humble and contrite, and is what I have described as the result of knowing that Christ has made our peace. The other is, that instead of the heart becoming conformed to the law written upon the conscience, the heart should blind the conscience, and teach it to give good names to evil things. Thus, whilst the heart remains unchanged and the conscience still says 'Be humble, be contrite,' peace is attained by calling that humility which is not humility and that contrition which is not contrition. The marvellous thing is that men should succeed in this: but they do succeed. Having settled that they *ought* to be humble and contrite, they set about cherishing the hope that they *are* so; and they attempt this with the more earnestness, and succeed the better, because they conceive that this humility and contrition, instead of being the fruit of tasting God's unspeakable gift, are somehow or other the conditions on which that gift is bestowed. But the humility and contrition

which people hope and trust they are attaining, as a step towards peace, are humility and contrition in name only and not in reality.

Weigh then well the words spoken. It is a fixed and unchangeable thing that without humility, without contrition, you cannot dwell with God or God with you ; that the provision which is needful in order to your being humble and contrite is contained in the knowledge that Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross, that having led captivity captive He has received gifts for the rebellious : and that while this is sufficient provision, anything else is no provision.

THE ROOT EVIL IN THE HEART OF MAN.

THE charge of evil which the Scripture brings against man, has reference to the tone and pervading temper of his life, to the secret spring of his actions; not to his occasional acts but to his ruling principle; to that in respect of which he does not suspect himself but in which he is himself deceived. The special evil of which I would now speak to you is this, that man sets himself up to be his own God; he casts off God as God, and acts as his *own master*, as one who is entitled to have a will of his own, to have a selfish and merely personal interest in things, and to pursue his own independent purposes. He is thus cut off from God's great plan, and is occupied with the secret individual plan that is interesting to his own heart. We must come to

see, each for himself, that this is evil—that no man has a right to be the centre of interest to himself; that no man has a right, in looking upon the things about him, to consider and value them as they affect himself merely, but that every man is justly required of God to put this question, 'In what light does God see and value these things; what plan is He pursuing with regard to them; how may I be found promoting God's designs; how may I become the instrument of carrying out His purposes?'

I know well that what is hateful to God in this matter is not hateful to man, but is often well-pleasing in his sight. I know that the exhibition of a number of persons, each pursuing his own plans and forwarding his own interests and choosing his own pleasures, if only they be honest and decent and quiet and sober, gives no offence, but, on the contrary, appears beautiful, amiable, and desirable; and men feel as if their desire for mankind would be accomplished if all did so. The very thing that God condemns they justify. The outward wrong indeed they

are ready to condemn : those particular forms of sin which distinguish some men from others in their natural state, appear to them as evil ; but that a creature formed and fitted for the purpose of enjoying and glorifying God should instead of this be glorifying and enjoying himself, in this men see no evil.

When any one is brought to see and really to condemn this godlessness of the heart, he will not go from worse to better among men, nor try to find comfort in contrasting his own conduct with that of others ; but, seeing that he is now contemplating that heart-scene in regard of which no man can say of his neighbour, 'My heart is better than his,' in regard of which every man who sees it must ever feel personally humbled and condemned,—he finds his comfort, not in contrasting himself with others, but in going at once to the contemplation of the character of God. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ; Thy judgments are a great deep." (Ps. xxxvi. 5.)

The Psalmist sees the oneness which subsists between all God's attributes, and the delusion in which those are living who think that some parts of His character are opposed to others: that His justice is opposed to His mercy; that His holiness is opposed to His goodness, tenderness and love. In all God's doings he sees but one character, one manifestation of the great truth that God is love.

You are little aware to what an extent men have come to separate between God's actions and His character: to what an extent they have come to look on what He does, not as revealing what He is, but as if it were some blind fate or necessity that produces events. I refer to the prevalent impression that things happen in the general course of God's providence according to some inscrutable divine purpose, but not because of God's thoughts towards them, or because of His love to them.

There is the greatest difference between seeing the rising of the sun in the morning, and the provision for your daily support of food and raiment, as coming to you merely in the ordinary

course of things, and seeing them as coming to you *directly* from God, the expression of a feeling in His heart as distinct and clear as though He were to stretch forth *His* hand and place these things in *yours*.

But, dear friends, it is more especially when we demand of you the belief of God's love in Christ, that the habit of separating between God and the gifts of His ordinary bounty proves a real and disastrous loss. In respect of your present comfort and enjoyment of the things which are, there is a great loss sustained; this, however, is comparatively a small matter. It is when the message of God's forgiving love in Christ is brought to you that you experience the full loss involved in this habit of thought. If you had been accustomed from your childhood to see that every breath you draw, every comfort you enjoy, is a manifestation of forgiving love, love to a sinner, love to an enemy who deserves it not;—then, when one comes and tells you that Christ died for you while you were yet a sinner, you would be ready to believe it,

and to trust in the loving-kindness of the Lord, which you had already learned to see preserving man and beast in all the earth.

My dear friends, I wish you knew what an excellent thing trust in God is. You would not be so much puzzled about faith and works, if you knew that the right and holy and desirable state for men is that they should be trusting in the Lord; if you knew that all hatred of sin, all setting of ourselves apart for good works, is contained in trusting in the Lord. What is trusting in the Lord? It is having such a knowledge of His character as raises us above all dependence upon creatures, and brings us to have confidence in Him. Who is the God in whom I am to have this confidence? A God loving righteousness and hating iniquity. Who is the man who can have confidence in such a God? The man who has learned to love righteousness and hate iniquity. No man can commit the future to God and expect all good from God who has not been taught to choose what God chooses for him. No man can expect

God to do for him what is against God's own will, because he desires it. No man can trust God to gratify him in an evil way. The person who is trusting God must be trusting for a good thing; and therefore it is that the description of the holy and good throughout the Book of Psalms is that they trust in God. If you knew what trust in the Lord is, you would feel that once to get people to trust in God is to accomplish everything; and, seeing this, you would see it equally clear that no man can be brought to trust in God *except through faith in what God is.* A time is coming to all when the condition of understanding that they can go from all created things to God Himself, will be seen in that excellence which belongs to it, and God will receive that special glory which is given Him through the trust of those who trust in Him; when His people shall be placed in circumstances in which nothing but that security shall or can keep them in peace; when every refuge of lies will be swept away; when it will be found that there is no resting-place for the soul in the

whole circle of the universe but in the name of God alone.

My dear friends, God has pronounced a curse on every one who maketh flesh his arm, and a blessing on every man who trusteth in the living God: this is the right condition of the creature; and if we are dwelt in by the Spirit of God, we shall be found saying "amen" to God's curse and "amen" to God's blessing. There is great glory to God in this. But if we look deep into the matter we must be conscious of a peculiar difficulty in entering into God's awful threatenings. We feel it easier to think that God will be merciful, than that a merciful God will punish the wicked. It is easier for us because of our ignorance, because we know not what is in God. But Christ, in whom there was continually dwelling the truth of God's love, always in the Psalms says "Amen" to God's future judgments. This is the explanation of many passages of the Psalms which look as if the Psalmist bore ill will to men. It is not so. It is not that Christ's love is limited by men's unworthiness, but that

He is recognising the great distinction between good and evil, and desiring that those who will not love God should experience that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God, in order that they may turn and live. His desire is that the ungodly should see the self-delusion and self-deception which are contained in the peace of those who know not God, and that God should continue His loving kindness to them that know Him and His righteousness to the upright in heart.

THE SECRET ATTRACTION OF UNBELIEF.

WE might reasonably expect that men would be desirous to know what God says and to have the authority of God in respect of what they believe concerning Him. Yet the fact is that men form a God to their own hearts' liking, instead of receiving the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. What is there in this revelation of God which men are slow of heart to believe, which men are unwilling to be taught concerning their God? It is God's love, my dear friends, it is God's love to yourselves individually. The objection is not to the general assertion that God is kind or gracious; but each man is unwilling to admit the love of God to *himself*, God's *free, unbought, unmerited love*, His love to man independent of what man is; a love which

in its mighty power is continually directed towards the man, notwithstanding all his sinfulness and rebellion. It is this interest in his well-being, this desire for his good, this pure and perfect love in God to man, which man is unwilling to believe. And why? Because to believe it is to have the consciousness of guilt. To admit the truth of this love, would be to have a voice within you testifying against your own sin, testifying that all the imaginations of your heart are only evil continually. It would be to have that within you which would expose the lie inherent in all human praise and consideration, and stain the pride of all human glory. The moment you see that it amounts to and implies this, there is a shrinking from the entrance of this knowledge of God's love to you into your heart: you do not wish to know yourself a debtor for love which you have never yet acknowledged, never returned; to know that there has ever been a manifestation concerning the heart of the living God towards you, to which your heart was blind and deaf and utterly insensible. Oh, it is im-

possible for any man to believe God's free and unbought love without being covered with shame and confusion : this is the secret of the evil heart of unbelief; *a proud heart will not believe in a condemning love.*

The love of God differs from our love to each other in that there is nothing in it flattering to our self-love. Accordingly it is unwelcomed by the natural heart. It has been said, "if you would make a man pleased with you, make him first pleased with himself." And this is truly the great principle of attraction and cohesion of human life. All human love is regarded as a tribute of esteem and is valued as such. The good opinion we form of each other is the acknowledged bond of affection between us. Take away the delusion of self-esteem, let the enchantment be broken, and let a man be reduced to the sober certainty that he is utterly unworthy of praise or esteem ; that in the estimate of the God of truth he is that evil thing which it required the blood of the Son of God to purify, and he will no longer find

any charm remaining in human praise, for pride itself cannot receive gratification from praise which it knows to be wholly undeserved.

It is an awful thing to see an intelligent being who can distinguish between good and evil, between love and enmity, in the attempt to retain his own peace and self-complacency, shutting out the light that would disturb him, by denying God's love to all. If love be of God's character; if it be of His very substance; if God *is* love, then of necessity God loves every man; yea, those who limit His love to some do actually deny that there is love in God at all, for this would not be love but mere partiality, and, however beneficial to those who are its objects, yet in respect of Him whose choice it is it can be no manifestation of *character* at all.

The attraction of unbelief then is this, that it allows man to remain far from God. We draw near to God not by change of place but by change of mind, in receiving God's truth into us, the truth of God's character, the truth of His presence; so that He becomes to us not a Being spoken

about, or speculated about, but the *present, living* God before whom man takes his place humbly as a creature, and in whose glory, albeit it proves his own nothingness, he has come to find his supreme delight. Belief is that condition of mind in which the realities of God thus act upon us—enter into our apprehension; and unbelief is the condition of mind in which these same realities are not realities to our apprehension. It is unbelief which makes the "far country." To fall into unbelief is to depart from the living God. Whither, indeed, can I go from His presence! There is no departure of that kind. But this is what man may or may not do—in doing which he drinks of life, in not doing which he tastes of death—he may have that God, who is in fact present with him, present to his heart, to his thoughts and feeling; or he may hold back from so receiving God to dwell with him.

We are exhorted by the Apostle to be watchful against the evil heart of unbelief; and yet that evil heart is common to every child of Adam. In what sense then are we called upon to take

heed lest it be in ourselves? One thing is clearly taught us by the fact of the admonition, that it depends on the man whether he is to have the heart of unbelief or not. It would be unreasonable to call on you to keep your heart with all diligence unless you have it in your power to do so. You therefore receive a lie into your hearts when you would put responsibility for the evil heart of unbelief away from yourselves and refer it to some necessity of your condition, and, while admitting in words that you ought to believe, hold that you cannot help your unbelief. It is quite true indeed that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and that man beareth this heart along with him to the very day of his death; but it is not true that any man is at any moment under the necessity of allowing the evil heart to work unbelief in him. No man is obliged to submit himself to this evil heart, so that it should manifest its evil in the existence of unbelief; no man is forced to have his estimate of what God speaks determined by the inclination of his

heart. God has given you power in the Spirit of Christ to live in the faith of Christ. It is this which makes it reasonable to caution you against giving way to unbelief. And remember for your help that the difference between a believer and an unbeliever is not the difference between one who *has* privileges and one who *has* them *not*, but between one who *knows* his privileges and one who *knows* them *not*. If the truth of anything I press on you depended on your being believers, then I could not thus address you till I knew whether you were believers or not. Hence the importance of seeing that faith is just the knowing as true what God has revealed Himself to be in Jesus Christ. And now I would ask of you who have not yet experienced the strength of those who walk in the strength of Christ, *Why do you not believe* in God's love to yourselves; that love which would bless you and make you holy; that forgiving, crucified love, which is seeking now nothing less for you than that you should be sons and daughters of the living God? What, I ask, is your reason for doubting

that God in Christ is not "imputing sin unto you," and that God is waiting to dwell in you by His Spirit, making you living temples to His praise? There is, there can be no reason for your not believing these things except that to believe them cordially would imply the turning of your whole being to God, and for this you are not prepared. So long as you think of pardon as a future thing, you feel as in a right state in waiting and hoping for it; and thus your present want of joy in God does not appear to you to be either a sin or a shame. So long as you think of the manifested love of God in Christ as embracing some only, you are not absolutely self-condemned, as you would be in rejecting a love sure and personal to yourself. The holiness of these doctrines is the true secret of your unwillingness to receive them; but take heed I pray you lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

THE TEACHING OF GOD IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

OH, if people would understand, when they allow the sense of unworthiness to separate between them and their God, that they are just adding sin to sin, they would not yield to it! It is not by keeping away for a time that we shall be truly humbled; it is in returning to contemplate God's love, with open face, that we shall be humbled. It is when we come very near to God, when we come into the light of the love out of which we had departed, and feel that it still flows out to us fresh and full even as it did before—that *it* is unchanged although *we* be changed—it is then that we are humbled and reproved, and at the same time taught that there is just one good and right state for a man to be in, the state of rejoicing in his God.

When I say to a person "rejoice in God," and he says, "*you* may have this joy, for you have repented; you are a changed being, a new creature; but I am not so yet:" such a person does not know that to repent, to be a new creature is just to come and delight in the name of God. So long as he imagines that he must first repent and then receive the message, so long he will not receive it. I warn you who have not yet rejoiced in God to be aware of this mistake: to know that the transition from the evil state which God condemns, to the righteous state in which God can rejoice over you, is just one step, and not many steps, one change, and not many changes, one movement of your heart from being away from your God, to turning towards Him.

I will now explain to you, on the subject of joy and trust in God, that the ground of our confidence is not a promise addressed to individuals by their names, but a promise sure to the just. *A promise is held out to those who will trust God for it.* This is the condition of those who shall ultimately "receive" the promise, that

they are now trusting God that they shall receive it. Observe, this confidence of hope is not a certainty that you as an individual are promised of God to enter into blessedness, but it is a certainty enjoyed in trusting God for an expected good, that it is a thing for which *all* may trust Him. This does not alter the degree of the confidence of the person trusting, but it alters the character of the confidence; it makes it, not the mere expectation of an event, but the expectation of something from God. People say 'If that which you call upon us to believe be true, it will be true whether we believe it or not.' Now this is so as to the fact that God loves you, that Christ died for you, that there has been an inheritance purchased for you; but the possession of the inheritance depends upon your actually trusting Christ for it. This is true of those who trust in Christ for the purchased inheritance; it is not true of those who are not thus trusting. What I ask you to believe is, that in giving you Christ, God has given you the inheritance, and that Christ has it for you; and I

know that if you see Christ as having it for you, then you will trust Christ for it, you will be one of those who now repose in joyful confidence upon God's promises, and who will in due time enjoy their fulfilment. It is no ground of comfort in thinking of your prospects, to know that the inheritance has been purchased for you, unless we know that you are trusting Christ for the inheritance; and therefore with the fullest and most entire belief that God loves all of you, that Christ died for every one of you, I can still have no peace concerning any individual among you, until I see that individual holding the confidence and rejoicing in God.

Now what is the basis of the confidence towards God which is implied in rejoicing in Him? We must have some sure and certain thing to rest upon in order that the confidence and the rejoicing may be "firm unto the end." And such a basis we have in the Cross of Christ. By that He laid the foundation for His own resurrection from the dead; and by that He laid the foundation for His being our resurrection and our life;

by that He laid the foundation for all the blessings which are stored up for us in Him, and which are to flow to us through Him. To know the glory which the Son gave the Father in the Cross is to know the foundation upon which the whole rests. You are accustomed to hear that Christ, by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. These are words with which you are acquainted. Do you know their meaning? Do you truly apprehend the substance of Christ's work? Do you understand *what it is* that God calls you to know when He calls on you to look at the Cross of Christ? I beseech you look to God to enable you to receive the word which I speak, and be not satisfied with mere empty sounds. As long as you are not put in much peril, you may have peace, you know not why nor how, from a form of sound words; but a form of sound words will afford no peace at all in the hour of trial. Now in order to understand how Christ condemned sin in the flesh, remember that Christ is God. Let not this for a moment be out of your mind. Remember

that He did not cease to be God when He became man. Say to yourselves, Here is God dwelling in my nature, surrounded by my temptations; in circumstances just like mine and exposed to be affected by them just as I am. What was His history in these circumstances? Did not Christ *continually* do while on earth the very opposite of what we do? did He not continually feel the opposite of what we feel? did He not continually speak the opposite of what we speak? He spoke as never man spake. He felt as never man felt. He went about employed in a way in which man had never been employed. He did this when He took our place; when He became our Brother; and He thus set forth what we ought to be as opposed to what we actually are. He among sinners, the brother of sinners, was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and thus, by being the opposite of what we are, He condemned what we are: He proved it was not the right thing; and not only so, but further proved (and this is most important) that there was no

reason why we should be what we are; that the demand on us to be holy is a righteous demand.

Every one is naturally disposed to say, It is my circumstances, my nature, my temptations —it is from these that my sin springs. God always testifies the opposite. He says, It is not your circumstances; it is your own evil heart of unbelief, your own will, your own self that chooses the evil and rejects the good. Some have been bold enough to speak out plainly and maintain that man's circumstances excuse his conduct. Others who do not affirm this so directly, yet talk of the effect of education and circumstances as an excuse for sin, at least to a certain extent. But the great question between God and man has always been, *Is man blameable for his sin?* Now this question is in fact the question whether God is righteous in punishing sin, for if sin be the result of our circumstances how can it be said to be our own and not God's doing? The recognition that sin is *our own* is necessary to a true sorrow for sin. You must be taught to see that for sin you are yourselves to

blame, that sin is altogether of yourselves, by seeing that Christ in your nature and in your circumstances was perfectly holy. Do you say that Christ was God, and that this makes a wide difference? He was indeed God. But you must remember that it was *through the eternal Spirit*, and not in His own might as the eternal Word that Christ presented Himself in our nature without spot to God; that He laid aside His glory and was content to be constantly dependent on His Father for strength and support, just as we are; and if it be the sure truth of God that Christ has the Spirit *for us*, then is there in Him a perfect provision as well as a perfect example for us that we should follow His steps. He showed us in our own nature and circumstances what we are called to be, and what God has, in the gift of Christ to us, made provision for our being; therefore He did truly condemn sin in the flesh, and His work in our flesh in respect of its perfect righteousness was a perfect condemnation of our sin.

But further mark the great importance of

Christ's work in its sacrificial character. Christ condemned sin not only by being the opposite of sin, but by giving Himself as a sin-offering to God. By submitting in His death to undergo the curse of God upon sin, He gave His testimony to the righteousness of God's curse upon sin. He gives up the human nature in which He stood to the law of death, and this though He Himself was holy and without spot of sin; and in so doing He confesses the justice of the penalty which that human nature (humanity) had incurred by transgression, and we are told that this yielding up of His flesh to death was a "sweet-smelling savour unto God," and that God does forgive sin through His blood.

But what is it that God delights in? What made the sacrifice of Christ an offering of a sweet-smelling savour unto Him? We see a holy innocent Being giving Himself up to suffering during all the days of His sorrowful life on earth, and at last to the agony of death, and to the endurance of that darkest of all hours in which He said "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

D-d·28.

111758

me?" and we are told that God who is righteous, God who is love, regards this as a sweet-smelling savour; that it comes up before Him as the pure incense with that perfume and sweetness which was typified in the offerings of Noah; that it was of such influence with God as to be the foundation of a Gospel of pardon proclaimed to all the children of men: yea, we are told to look on every temporal blessing—on the very shining of the sun and falling of the rain—as the effect of this sacrifice, to look on the promise of the Spirit as a fruit of it: yea, that there is no one thing through all eternity in which God will show the exceeding riches of His grace which is not to be referred to it; that in a word the key to God's character and to all His doings is contained in it.

What question then can we ask of such deep importance as this—why was God so pleased with this sacrifice? Why did He so rejoice over it? Why did He cause it to be the foundation of His throne? Was it because of the amount of pain and agony endured? That alas is the feeling

many have about the cross of Christ. But I ask, Is it the existence of pain and agony, were it ever so great—and it was great, it was infinite!—but is it this that God has built so much upon? Impossible; it cannot be. What then was it? It was the righteousness of the sacrifice, the holiness of the blood, the purity of all the tears and all the pain that Christ endured: it was because in that sacrifice God's eternal law of love was magnified and made honourable, because sin was thus condemned in our flesh; because in it God's love to sinners, God's hatred of sin was expressed; because the Eternal Word declared the Eternal Father, in that He became flesh and gave Himself to death for the life of the world, and thus *God was manifested.*

On this foundation all rests. Christ having declared the Father's name; having shown us what the Father's love is, that He yearns over us with a love which was contented to die for us: and what the Father's holiness is, that He grieves and agonizes over our sinfulness; having thus declared the Father's name, God raised Him up

to be a witness, a Leader and Commander, and gave Him power over all flesh. Thus He became to us the fountain of life, and received for us remission of sins, repentance, and all things pertaining to life and godliness. And now is the Gospel proclaimed to the children of men; now they have access into the Holiest by His blood; now they are in a condition to know God, to worship Him, and to delight in Him.

And what is the effect of my having been taught these things by the cross of Christ? It is that I remember my ways, and am confounded and can never more open my mouth in self-defence. In the sight of this work of Christ I see that all my excuses and all my apologies for continuing in sin have been false; that in the sight of the Lord my God there is no excuse for sin. No words can express my sense of unworthiness as I thus see myself in the Divine light of the cross of Christ. Not only have I been sinning without excuse all my life, but I have been sinning against the infinite love and holiness which were yearning over me morning by morning and day by day. This has

been my history. I awake and find that all my past self-complacency and comfort in my fancied discharge of duty and conformity to the requirements of religion have been a dream. Thus I am taught by the blood of Christ the condemnation of sin in the flesh.

But what further do I see in the blood of Christ? Is it despair? No, I see my forgiveness. I see that all this guilt is no longer a barrier between me and my God. I see that Christ having died for us all, has done that which is fitted to give us all confidence towards God. I am shut up into this one thing, to look unto Jesus and be healed; to look and be saved; to see my sins, and to see them forgiven; to know that the longing I feel to be like my God is no vain longing, but a thing within my reach; because though I cannot, yet Christ in me can glorify the Father.

My dear friends, I would earnestly beseech those of you who have not yet known the love of God, to set aside all past notions and impressions and look at the thing afresh as now set before you.

My dear friends, will you not believe that God is good? You confess it in words but will you not own it in your hearts? Will you not believe in your hearts that God is *grieved* because of sin? You admit that He has forbidden it, that His law is against it; but you regard God's law as a lifeless thing, in which He has as little interest as the judge of an earthly court might have in the law which he is administering. But *God's law* is God's own heart *come out in the shape of a law.* When Christ magnified the law and made it honourable, He proved it to be God's heart, and so He glorified it. Do not feel then as if God commanded you to be holy and yet was personally indifferent whether you are holy or not. Oh, if you knew the truth, you would find God's very commandments to be all promises, His very laws to be encouragements; and you would find yourselves emboldened to come to Him for His Spirit, and to look to Him for His strength just because He required obedience; and instead of saying God has commanded, but I cannot meet His requirements,

you would say I am commanded to do this because it is *according to God's will;* and therefore I may trust God to enable me to do it.

I beseech you to know that you have to do, not primarily with laws and doctrines, but with the living God: that you have to do not with rules or precepts or opinions, but with a real Person, a living God, One who does at this moment as truly see you and as truly think of you individually, as if you saw Him in this room. *He is here.* He is saying, O that my people would trust me! O that my people would meet my love! Love cannot exist, love is not love, if it does not desire a return; God's love would not be love if it did not desire our love. But He loves us with an intensity of yearning which is according to the nature of love. He is drawing us to Himself with cords of love. As all rivers flow into the ocean, so God seeks that the affections of all hearts should flow into His own. God is not changed: His love was shown in the history of the man Christ Jesus, but it IS in the Heart of God; it was shown in the

days of Christ's flesh, but He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. It was then made known once for all; for all times, for all persons, for all circumstances. The cross of Christ is to be seen as unveiling God's heart in its movement towards every human being, continually, without ceasing day or night; whether we pray, or withhold prayer; whether we seek His face, or turn from Him: this is the heart of God.

And yet those who are debtors to God for all things will dare to debate the question whether God loves them! That you whom God has made, whom God has upheld; you to whom His mercies have been new every morning; you who owe everything to His forgiveness through Christ's blood,—that you should make God's love to yourselves personally, a question, is a daring sin. The question of His love has been answered long ago; and he who denies it, denies the Lord that bought him, and counts the blood of the covenant a common thing. But men shrink from the full admission of this truth into their inmost heart, because there is no way

of excusing distance from God but by limiting His love. There is no middle ground between the deepest self-abasement, the most entire self-loathing, and the denial of the certainty of God's love to you as an individual soul. There is a strange contradiction in your natural hearts on this subject. You will not believe that God loves you so as to have comfort and peace in the thought of His love; and yet you will not believe that God can deal so hardly with you as to let the punishment of your sins fall upon you: you have some vague notion of a mercy, a disposition to spare, which is not love at all; but which though not enough to give present confidence, lulls the fear of impending judgment. Why will you not be simply taught of God? If God's ways are not as your ways, nor His thoughts as your thoughts, you must receive His own teaching in order to know Him.

O let the conviction of your own ignorance bring you to God that you may learn of Him from Himself, let it cause you to lean not on your own understandings, but on the Lord your God.

THE GLORY WHICH IS IN THE NAME OF GOD.

My dear friends, the real importance of any influence; the power which, viewed in itself, it is fitted to exercise, is a different thing from its actual power on our minds. The extent, for example, to which the authority of God will influence an individual depends, not on the weight which really belongs to His authority, but entirely on the apprehension of it which that individual has. The real weight of the name of God on any one's mind depends just on what that person at the moment feels regarding the place and power of God, and the reality of His control over him. It is an awful thing to consider what a mere sound the name of God often is, owing to the power of the flesh to conceal

Him from us and to prevent our realizing what He is, and our absolute dependence upon Him. Hence it comes to pass that men can be familiar with the name and character of God in words, and yet have no feeling at all of God as God. The real cause of this widely-spread ignorance and indifference in the hearts of men to what God testifies of His own character is, that they have come to think of His appointments as if these were not expressive of feeling or character at all. They do not perceive that the different ways men have of explaining what comes to pass, are merely different ways of saying that things are as they are. In saying, for example, that the rain falls because the clouds are loaded with moisture you merely state the fact with more of the circumstances. If you say that food nourishes you by the action of certain organs of digestion and assimilation you are merely stating the fact that you are nourished, not explaining the cause of the fact. It must be thus so long as you do not refer the fact of life to Him who is the Doer of all things, even God; so long as you

do not ascend to Him and see in His mind the reason of all things.

How different is the feeling which we find pervading the Psalms! The Psalmist is always seeing God in everything, and never separates between any event and Him. Even the oppression of the wicked, viewed in its bearing on himself, he ascribes to God. He speaks of the sufferings which he endured at the hands of sinful men as of God's waves and billows rolling over him, God's wrath lying heavy upon him. This is just seeing things *truly*, for God *is* in everything; and not to see that this is so is a doing away with God altogether, as regards any real living to Him or perception of Him.

There are two ways in which people escape from the feeling that God is in everything: one, by not thinking of God at all; and the other, by thinking of Him as One, who uses them for the accomplishment of certain unknown ends. In their ignorance of the fact that God is love, and while seeking for themselves a kind of importance which they never had nor can have, they have not per-

ceived their true importance, and thus ignore the true value which belongs to man as weighed in the scales of God's love. And so men see no reference to their good in the ordinary course of events; and while they single out certain things which they term their mercies, they ascribe the great bulk of God's actions to the pursuit of something, they know not what, which they call His glory, and regard only a few occasional remarkable events as the outgoings of love. And this is done even by people who are reputed to be pious.

But is it not true that God acts with a view to His glory, contemplating that glory in all He does? Assuredly. But what is meant by this? Are we to be satisfied with the word glory, and to suppose that it is something for the value of which all other things are to be sacrificed; or are we to be instructed wherein God's glory consists? God's glory is the manifestation of His excellence; it is the showing forth of His goodness: and therefore to talk of its being the object of His actions, without knowing this, is to use words without any meaning. If

God is making use of me for His own glory, He must be taking occasion to show His goodness by me; and so it comes to this, that in saying God is doing a thing in which I am concerned for His glory, I am just saying that God is so acting towards me because He is good. You must find love to be the motive for what God does before you can say that it is for His glory.

Men, I repeat, are accustomed to distinguish between the events of their lives: to think of some as in the ordinary course of God's dealing; and to single out others which they term their mercies, and mark as proofs of a desire to do them good. Now I wish you to understand that in these latter events God is not acting on some plan or arrangement whereby the particular benefit to an individual is attained by the sacrifice of other objects; but that He is acting throughout, in all events, on the same principle. The reason for the one description of events is the reason for the other; and the intention of God in both is love, where men do not see love equally as where they do see it.

And so with regard to prayer for things we feel to be good in themselves. It is our ignorance of God that makes us think it more presumptuous to expect to get anything from God in answer to prayer, than to expect to obtain blessings in the ordinary way of His providence. We have not discerned the love of God in the means which He has given us of obtaining these blessings; we have not seen His hand in those things which He has given us without our asking. Had we done so we should be ready to argue thus:—if it is after the manner of God to bestow liberally when we are not making request, in order to draw our hearts to Him, then surely it is according to the same desire, that He should authorise us to make request and confidently to expect the good for which we are allowed to ask.

If we judged without considering man's evil heart, we should think it far more delightful to feel ourselves encompassed by the arms of love than to feel ourselves under "laws of nature." It would be so were it not for the pride of our

hearts. But pride can dwell in the midst of laws of nature, in which there is no soul, no love: it cannot dwell in the presence of a living God. A man who sees his talents and opportunities and all his circumstances as something in the midst of which he is placed to make the most of things for his own glory, feels comfortable among laws of nature of which he can take advantage, so to speak, by reason of his wisdom; but a man cannot meet God in every event, coming near to him in condescending and protecting love, and not be humbled. Therefore the proud heart of man draws back from the statement that God is love; and thus the love of God proves a repulsive doctrine when brought out in its true meaning, and when men are made to see that this love is testified to them in everything, and that it demands everything from them in return.

FAITH AND HOPE.

WE are saved by hope. Seeing that everything is included in being *saved*, we must be prepared to regard the meaning of this word as one of the most interesting subjects which can engage our attention.

What is Hope? It is simply the expectation of some future good. Nothing more than this is necessarily implied in the word. Hope is generally conceived of as implying uncertainty, as if to say, "I hope for a thing," were to say, I look for it doubtfully, I expect it in a measure, but I am not sure of it. But it is not so. When the Apostle says "We hope for that we see not," he puts *hope* and *present vision* in contrast; not certainty and uncertainty, but things *seen* and things *not seen*: and that no idea of uncertainty

is implied is plain from what follows, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," expressing the peaceful calm security in which we wait. How is it then that Hope should have come to be associated with uncertainty?

There is another word in Scripture—"Faith"—which is of equal importance, for it is said "We are saved by Faith,"—with which the idea of uncertainty has also been associated. Faith is the belief of some statement made, and is therefore not necessarily uncertain any more than Hope. But the principle upon which they are both often conceived of as involving uncertainty is the same, and it is this:—from our cradles we walk by Faith and Hope; all our exertions, all our plans, involve both; but the faith and hope of the natural man proceed on probable evidence, rest on probable grounds, and in consequence are attended with uncertainty. Every day we are obliged to act on grounds not absolutely certain, upon presumptive evidence: and thus we have come to regard the expression "I

believe it" as almost the same with "I am not sure of it;" for when the materials of our judgment, the means of knowledge we possess, are in their nature uncertain, it is obvious that our faith must partake of that uncertainty. In like manner the hope of men often rests on uncertainties. I hope to see a friend to-morrow, but I cannot be certain of it. Every human hope is uncertain, because of the instability of the things around us. No wonder that people accustomed thus to see faith and hope doubtfully applied, should have associated uncertainty with the very words. But observe, the uncertainty is in that on which the faith or hope rests: if we get a sure ground on which to rest, there is no longer any cause for uncertainty. Faith and hope in religion have reference to the words of God, and these are sure and steadfast; there is therefore no reason why the hope or faith should be uncertain.

But it is not so much to the *nature* of Hope that I am anxious to direct your attention, as to the *object* to which Christian hope is supposed to refer.

The hope of the Christian is often supposed to be, that he himself has a personal interest in the blood of Christ: that is the fact to which the hope refers, whether certain or uncertain; whether a full assurance or merely a presumption. But hope has reference to a future thing, not to that which is present or past; and it is confounding the objects of faith with those of hope to make what Christ has done an object of hope. What then is the object of hope? It must be something which God has yet to do. I will refer you to a few of the many passages of Scripture in which hope is spoken of.—1 Peter, i. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . which hath begotten us to a lively (or life-giving) hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven* for you, who are kept by the power of God *through faith.*" Again St. John says, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and every one that hath this

hope in Him purifieth himself"—referring the purity of the believer to this hope. Again we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews chap. x., the power to overcome evil ascribed to hope. "Call to remembrance the former days in which . . . ye endured a great fight of affliction . . . ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods—knowing *that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance.*" This was their hope. The object of hope then is a future manifestation of God, some completing of the plan of God in Christ: this, and not my own present personal interest in Christ, is the object of Christian hope.

But why am I so anxious to make a broad distinction between *faith* in the fact of my interest in Christ, and the *hope* for the future which springs from that fact? Because the moment I see that God is not now imputing sin to me, that moment my joy springs from the same source from which God's own joy springs. If the object of my hope is that I shall be saved in the great day of judgment, then the object of my

attention, my present labour and exertion is to ascertain my safety; and all the graces of the divine character—the love, the holiness, the righteousness, the truth of God; all those rays which together make up the sum of the glory of the Son of God, I am anxious to discover in myself mainly in order to find out the answer to the question Am I safe? But this is not all. If a man comes direct to the Cross of Christ and in faith apprehends what is there set forth, taking it on God's word that it is all for him, then he starts free to examine into the meaning of the blood of Christ, and so goes on from one degree of knowledge to another as to the work of God in Christ. But, if instead of simply apprehending that what Christ has done is done for all, there be a previous personal question of the deepest interest: Has that blood been shed for me? it is plain that I shall be kept debating and inquiring *on this side of the cross*, so to speak, and shall not go on to know the cross itself; and this is the secret why such a statement as *Christ shed His blood for sin*

can be heard again and again with so little emotion.

People have taken for granted that they know what Christ has done, but think that the question still remains, How are we to become personally interested in what He has done? and hence they do not live under the awful sense of having been bought with such a price. When a man knows that an interest in Christ is already given to him freely, in so much that nothing can make it more fully his than it is already; that after a thousand years' walking with God he could have no other ground of confidence in coming to God than he has at this moment, he is set free from all selfish reference to any good thing in himself: he has got a discovery of God's love which reconciles him to God, and makes him to be of one mind with God: and the consequence is that he feels Christ to be precious because He saves His people from their sins. And therefore while patiently waiting for the glory which is to be revealed, he occupies the present time as a man to whom that hope is dear, whose heart will be

fully satisfied only when God's object is fully accomplished. Is it too much to say of this man that his hope is purifying him; that he is righteous *as Christ was righteous;* and that while his *ground* of peace is the work of Christ in the flesh, the *effect* of this peace is the imparting to him the very character which was in Christ Jesus?

There is a great difference between *desire for Christ* and desire for *an interest in Christ.* The Christian is one whose heart is captivated with the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: he who merely desires *an interest in Christ* is one whose selfishness has been transferred from temporal things to eternal things; and the attempt to identify this desire for something which is sought, not as an end, but merely as the condition of safety, with the Christian's desire for communion with God is a daring attempt to forge the true coin of Christ's Kingdom.

The great question is this—Has the work of Christ put you into a condition in which it is reasonable to say to you Repent and give God glory, or has it not? Is it right to tell you to

pray—to draw near to God? Unquestionably the sinner with unatoned guilt on his head has no title to come to God. People fancy they may pray without presupposing an interest in Christ, but this is denying the necessity for a Mediator. If you have courage to draw near to God before you know whether the barrier is removed or not you are making sin a very light matter. God, who teaches us that our sins have erected a barrier, also teaches that the blood of Jesus has removed the barrier; and *therefore* He says, Come unto Me.

PRAYER.

MEN are tempted to think that there cannot be anything really left dependent on them in any great event which God desires to accomplish; that the objects which have a place in God's counsels are things which they should reverently adore and devoutly contemplate, but with the bringing to pass of which they have nothing to do. In point of fact it is quite otherwise. These objects are to be brought about through our prayers, and if we give not ourselves to prayer we are justly condemned of God as drawing back from the part assigned to us. It is laid on us who are of the light and of the day, who know the condition of men and their true interests, the evil state of men as they are by nature and the good con-

dition to which they are called in the Gospel, that we offer supplications, prayers, intercession and giving of thanks for them, that we seek for them that which we know to be good, and bless God for His goodness to them; seeking for them that which we know they need, whether they themselves are seeking for it or not; acknowledging on their account that for which we know them to be debtors to God, whether they acknowledge themselves to be debtors or not.

But having our minds occupied with the condition of others, and desiring good for others according to what we know of their interests, is not necessarily prayer. Prayer implies that we feel this good thing to be within the reach of our supplications: that we not only *desire* it for them, but that we *ask* it for them, from One who is able and willing to bestow it; however fervently we desire a thing there is no real prayer beyond the real faith in God that He will grant it. It is one explanation of the fact that people think they pray much

when they really do not pray at all, that all earnest pleading is conceived to be prayer; that feeling the importance of a thing, and being anxious to receive it, and earnestly soliciting God to give it, is prayer. When we come asking good things doubtfully, however earnestly, we are not giving God glory; when we come to Him with earnest *desire only* but not *expectation*, we are withholding glory. It is no testimony from us to God's goodness that we are anxious to receive a good thing; but it is a testimony to His goodness that we will *trust* Him to give it. To say that we are earnest in our prayer is just to say that we conceive ourselves good; in being earnest, people think they have done their part, and that they have manifested a right feeling when they have asked a thing sincerely and pleaded hard for it. But observe, their earnestness proves only something about themselves and their own choice of good things, not any confidence in God's goodness or love. Prayer is the offering our desires to God for things according to His will; and our conclud-

ing with the word 'Amen!' is understood to express our confidence that God both hears our prayers and will answer them. Whatever God has revealed to us as a subject for prayer He has placed within our reach. To ask God for a thing, not believing that He is willing to give it, is not to go on God's promise but on a venture.

The ground on which we are commanded to pray for all men is, that "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;" and we are further taught that this prayer for others is a condition of our minds over which God rejoices. Our meditating on God's character, our admiring what we are taught to believe of Him, is recognised as a reality, when we prove that we do in truth believe Him by taking Him at His word. People are apt to reason that if God 'willeth all men to be saved' they must be saved whether we pray or not; but if we reason thus there is no space for prayer at all, we come to the conclusion that it is our part to stand by and leave God to fulfil

His own counsel. It is manifest here, however, that the 'will' in God is a will which is to move our prayer; it cannot therefore be a determined counsel fixing the fact that all men shall be saved, for the willingness in God that all men should be saved is presented as the ground for prayer. It is indeed a mystery that God should have a will to the salvation of every one, and yet that He should lay it on men themselves to pray, so that their prayers shall intervene between His will and its accomplishment. It seems that God would have us pray on the understanding that His willingness does not of itself secure the result; although it is the ground on which we may trust Him for the result, and that only in our trusting Him is the result secured.

This is a deep mystery, but it is in harmony with the whole scheme according to which Christ came to suffer, the just for the unjust. Intercession is part of that great scheme of God, the root and principle of which is that God sends forth His own holiness and love to dwell in

human nature in this world of sin and misery, so connected with that sin and misery as to be affected and agonized by the sight, and moved to prayer by the feeling of that agony; enduring a grievous burden because of the evil, and so stirred up to come to God and plead with Him that He would remove the evil. It is one fulfilling of the great purpose of God to make His own love come into the world where there is no love—there to feel poor and needy because of the absence of all that love can delight in; there to be grieved and agonized because of the apprehension and sense of what the world is; and thence to call upon God, as from the deep pit and miry clay, that He would come and destroy the evil, and cause light to arise out of darkness, and life out of death.

To me it appears that, unless the interference of God on behalf of man had thus been made the answer to the prayers of a holy longing, the righteous character of that interference would not have been proved. When we see in Christ love moved by the evil around it,

by prayer laying hold of God's strength for the accomplishment of all its holy and gracious desires; and then contemplate God as the hearer and answerer of these prayers, we learn what it is that moves the eternal Father; what cry it is which will find a response in His bosom —the cry of righteousness; the cry for that which is truly good. It is a part of this great scheme that we should fill up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ; that Christ should in the members of His body be exposed to the same sorrows, be moved to the same prayers and pleadings which He offered in the days of His flesh: and this is properly our place who are called to be filled with the Spirit of Christ; that in us His Spirit should make intercession for the evil that is in man.

Let there be in us the knowledge of God's mind revealed in Christ, seeing in Him what are the yearnings of God's heart over sinners: and in the strength of Christ let us be holding what we see as living truth, realizing it through the possession of the mind which was in Christ;

and it will necessarily follow that what in God comes forth as the yearning of love over men, will return from us to God in the shape of prayer for them; that receiving from the heart of God through Christ, by the Spirit, God's own yearnings, we shall be found sending them back to God in prayers and intercessions according to His will.

To know God simply as an absolute sovereign, bowing to His doings merely because they are His, receiving His commands merely because He commands, this is not to know God as a fountain of life. Unless the character of God, and not merely the fact that there is a God, be apprehended, there is nothing known of God upon which the soul can feed. See then what a fresh well-spring of life it is, that this is the very truth concerning God, that "He willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" that as God is good, He delights in men's deliverance from evil; as He is holy, He delights in men's deliverance from sin; as He is true,

He delights in men's deliverance from unbelief and ignorance and belief of a lie, for all unbelief is the belief of a lie: and thus, just because God is good and holy and true, it is necessarily the fact that He will have all men to be saved, to become holy and true, to be brought out of darkness into His marvellous light. I speak to those who have in a measure realized the will of God towards them; who have come to feel that there is revealed to them from God in Christ something in which they may safely trust: and I beseech them to realize what a different thing it is to admit in words the fact of God's love to all, from what it is to dwell in the vision of this love. People who live among speculations may be satisfied with the clearness of their conclusions: what we have to do with is the living God, the present heart and mind of that living God: and the work of faith is the work of abiding in the consciousness of the reality of what we believe; and therefore the continual presence of the Spirit of God in us is needful to that work.

Unless we see the love of God resting on men we cannot realize what they are called to become, what *may* be their condition. When we see and know God as loving every human being, we know what that fountain of love is out of which they might be drinking, although as yet they refuse to drink; and therefore, in estimating what would be their condition were they changed, we have this love, which is about them and upon them, teaching us what is needed for them, even the knowledge of the love.

But what would be our situation if we were simply in the secret of this loving aspect of God towards men, and God had not appointed the ordinance of prayer? We should see in the case of every unconverted person a gap, a space, between two hearts—the heart of God and that of His rebellious creature,—and we should feel a longing desire to have this distance removed; and yet we could do nothing with the removal of it, but must just look on in helpless mourning over it. And now we come

to the fact that it is good and acceptable with God *that we pray* that the barrier over which we must needs mourn may be removed; *that we ask* of God that the ignorance and consequent distrust of God which is in our brother may cease, and that so—no longer mere spectators of a painful spectacle—we give ourselves, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to exercise faith in God in respect of this evil thing, seeking that it be changed. You know that when Christ is spoken of as being all that the Father delighteth in, His intercession is mentioned. "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." This intercession, this pleading for the transgressors, is part of the excellence of the Lord Jesus; and the same thing is here said to be good and acceptable in the sight of God when He finds it in us, the members of the body of Christ.

Delighting in the good, and knowing that power belongeth to God, and that to Him also belongeth mercy, there should be no faint-heart-

edness. There can be no consciousness of helplessness in the longings and yearnings of love, so long as we know and realize that God is love. We are in fact making ourselves better than God when we say 'Were we God, this good thing would be done, but because we are not God it cannot be done.' We should realize that there is no goodness in us which does not come from God as a fountain, and no desire which God has taught us to cherish with which we may not come back to God Himself, and, having received it as an inspiration from Him, may not breathe it back in believing prayer. This is our calling, that we confer not with flesh and blood, but rise up out of all surrounding circumstances into the heart and mind of God; and, dwelling there, realize His will that none should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved; and so be strengthened to breathe forth into the ear of God those longings of holy love which He Himself has put within us. *This is our place*, that we yield ourselves to the Spirit, to be agonized with

Christ's agonies because of the sins of men—to be filled with Christ's longing for their salvation. In this way the living Head is to be multiplied in all His members, and a voice is to ascend from the whole body interceding with God.

If you confer with flesh and blood as to this matter, all I have said will go for nothing; countless suggestions from your own hearts will destroy its power: but I say again, stand on the word and truth of God, be consistent, pray not at all or pray according to the revelation of God's word. If you believe you will get *any* thing for the asking, where is the limit? How can you draw a line of distinction between the things God teaches you to desire? Therefore either give up prayer altogether, or pray as to that God who will have prayers, intercession and giving of thanks to be made for all men. The work of faith is the abiding in God and coming to Him in faith, and praying in the power of faith. Therefore be not satisfied with uttering wishes before God, but pray in faith—

in expectation; do not conceive yourselves to be praying at all, unless you are laying hold of God's willingness in the matter and trusting it. Any one who has known what it is to exercise this faith, knows that it is quite different from holding the true doctrine on the subject; so that while holding the true doctrine during the whole day, it may be that only during one minute of that day you have been working the work of faith.

And now I ask you individually how far you have acted on the truth of God's willingness to hear and answer prayer? How far have you realized the importance of your own special place as an intercessor, and your responsibility as to the souls of others who are perishing for lack of knowledge? What proportion of your time have you distinctly given, as in the sight of God, to the work of drawing down blessings on others, in the faith that this is the appointed way of being a blessing to your fellow-men? If a person bestows a great proportion of his time in conversing with others,

or in writing to them, or in any way declaring to them the truth, apart from this looking to God and expecting from Him the increase, is he giving acknowledgment to this ordinance of prayer?

Again, to what extent have the seasons set apart for prayer been occupied with prayer. Take away first the words that were used almost without thought, then those which represented thoughts, but which were rather meditations than prayer—then take away those petitions which were not accompanied with *expectation*—with the faith that they would be received, and what remains to be set down as real prayer—that prayer which has the promise—the prayer which connects its own answer with God's faithfulness, so that the one is the assurance of the other?

ARE NOT MY WAYS EQUAL?

"THEREFORE, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, thus ye speak saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."*

There is a oneness in the excuses of the evil heart of unbelief at all times: therefore has God caused His dealings with the Jews of old to be recorded for our instruction; and therefore has the record of what they said in their hearts and among themselves been preserved for us, that we might know what the Lord's true answer is to that secret feeling by

* *V.* the whole passage Ezekiel xxxiii. 1-20.

which men cast the blame of their sin on their God.

For what was it to say, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" but to regard their sins and transgressions as something that was in them, in such a way as that there was no remedy; and is not this the very same feeling which men now express when they say that their condition is such that they cannot believe in the word of their God or meet His requirements; when they say with regard to their unbelief that they cannot help it; and when they find an apology for what is amiss in their outward conduct in the evil state of their hearts, which evil state they regard rather as their misfortune than their fault?

The language here ascribed to the children of Israel is language with which your own hearts are quite familiar. And, put into the simplest form of words it amounts to this, 'If we be sinners, how should we be holy?' Examine yourselves, I pray you, and see if, in respect of

everything in your hearts which you are conscious is not what it ought to be, you have ever found any better apology than simply *the fact that so it is.*

You say the evil is natural to you, and so in a sense it is; but in another sense it is not natural. The only sense in which it can be called natural is as being the fact: but it is not natural in as much as it is not according to man's original creation by God; and it is not natural in that you are still under no necessity to sin. My dear friends, you ought to be conscious of being detected, as in the act of sin, with regard to such habitual excuses for sin, when you find condemnation attached by the Holy Ghost to the very same kind of excuse in the mouth of the Jews. You must see that your reasonings and your excuses are no new thing, when you recognise that the very same excuses are charged upon the children of Israel by God Himself *as sin.* It matters not whether you call your disobedience transgression or unbelief; so long as you reason yourselves into the opinion that there is

something in your condition which excuses your not meeting the will of your God, you are deceiving your own souls. The sinners reproved by the Prophet were not denying that they were sinners. They only asked, '*how can we live?*'

There is not one amongst us who denies that he is a sinner; not one of those who are not rejoicing in the love of God in Christ, who is not ready to say, 'I know it is my own unbelief.' No one has any difficulty in confessing that it is a great loss to himself that he is not what he wishes to be. But, you say, 'We cannot help it:' if our transgressions are upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we live? My dear friends, I do not say that you can live in such a state; but the question is, must you continue in that state? The question is not whether a person continuing under the power of sin can live; but whether you, as individuals, can live—that is, come out of your evil state and *live;* not continue in your evil state and live, but come out of it and so live; and my

statement is, that in supposing yourselves to be under some necessity by which you are constrained to go on as you are and to be as you are, you are under a delusion. There is delusion in feeling that there is any obstacle to your being changed,—that there is any reason why you should continue as you are.

Observe, it is declared that there is no will in God for the destruction of the wicked, but that there is a will in God for their salvation. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?" God calls on them to turn because of His will that they should turn, and asks them why they should die? inasmuch as *there was no necessity for this*, from anything they could possibly see in God. As if God had said, "*I* cannot tell why you should die: *I* have no reason why you should die; I ask yourselves, why you should die? If the reason does not come from yourselves, it shall not come from Me."

However people may in words ascribe to God holiness and goodness and truth and mercy, they

are uttering vain idle compliments unless they in their hearts believe that God 'willeth not the death of a sinner.' Unless they believe this, I care not though they call God good. They call Him so in words, but deny it in substance. I care not though they call God love. It is but an empty word in their lips while they exalt His sovereignty at the expense of His moral character, doing away, in fact, with His moral character altogether; speaking of His doing what He pleases, in a way that seems to imply that good and evil are alike indifferent to Him.

I would have you mark how very different God's way of vindicating Himself is from that which men have taken, in their mistaken zeal for His glory. The principle according to which there was no reason why they should die is here stated, and it is this: that "if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live." By this statement it appears that God deals

with all on the same fair, and just, and righteous ground; that it is not men but character that God looks to—that it is not the individual but the state which He considers; that God is no respecter of persons, and that no one can truly say that his perishing in his sins is the doing of the Lord.

The Jews had said, 'The way of the Lord is not equal.' The Lord testifies by His Prophet that their way was not equal, but that His way was equal. They had said that the Lord showed kindness to some and unkindness to others, not on any principle of righteousness, but arbitrarily. The answer virtually is, God has never said of such and such persons by their names that they shall be blessed, and of such and such that they shall be cursed; God has not chosen people out in that way: but He has testified that His pleasure in the righteous is *in their righteousness*, so that, if they depart and do wickedly they shall die; and that in like manner if the wicked turn from their wickedness they shall live.

But the whole of this passage must be unintelligible unless you understand what 'righteousness' is, and what 'wickedness' is. You may, indeed, know this much :—that it is those who are in a certain condition of character who are safe, and it is those who are in another condition of character who are exposed to wrath. This you may see on the surface of the repeated statements we have considered; but it is another thing to understand what God means when He speaks of righteousness, and what He means when He speaks of wickedness. If you mean one thing by these words and God another, you are not understanding God, and cannot receive His instructions. Our Lord recognises the oneness of God's law when He says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." When elsewhere He says, "This is the commandment of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent"—it may appear as if there

were some difference; but there is none, for love to God and faith in Christ are in reality one. God is not changing the principle of His government, at one time telling us to love, and at another to believe. When He requires faith in Christ He is not recalling the command to love. but in point of fact saying, I call on you to *believe*, as that which is necessary to enable you to *love*. Righteousness *is* delight in God, joy in God. It is a mistake to separate between these, and to hold that a man must first be righteous and then he is entitled to delight in God—that he must first be good, and then he may have confidence in God. The fact is that there is no true goodness except in rejoicing in the good God; no true holiness except in the devotedness of the heart to our reconciled Father; no true love except that which is the reflection of the love of God in Christ to us, we loving Him because He first loved us. It is utterly useless to call upon you to be righteous, unless you know that when God complains of your not being righteous, the thing of which He complains is that your

hearts are not delighting in Him who made you, and that when God calls on you to believe in Christ, the thing you are required to believe is a thing fitted to make you delight in Him who made you. Righteousness in man is *dwelling in the light of that love which God bestows upon him without money and without price.* This is to give God glory; this is to have the mind of Christ; and for this God has in Christ made provision for all men. He has said, "Let my captives go without money and without price." He who led captivity captive, overcame for them; conquered *for* them that He might conquer *in* them. All is contained in the gift of Christ.

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

"THUS saith the Lord. There is one Lord and His Name is One." There is one God, who is above all, and through all, and in all, to whom belongeth the glory for ever and ever.*

My dear friends, I beseech you not to think that you have no occasion to be told that there is but one God. The heart of man is still the heart of that fool who said, There is no God. You or I, in so far as we speak according to our natural hearts, according to the desires of the flesh and of the mind, still say that we shall be as gods, and that none shall reign over us. I therefore entreat of you—seeing it is not a thing you will easily do, or do as a matter of course—I entreat of you that you would acknowledge

* Jeremiah xvii. 5-8.

that there is but one God. Dream not that you are at the mercy of chance and accident, of creatures or of fate; but remember, *that there is a God.* Oh, it is a blessed word that there is a God, and that it is not left for good and evil to contend together for ever, striving for the mastery; that there is a God who reigneth in Heaven, and who considereth the things that are done on earth; who has counsels and thoughts in His heart which shall stand to all generations; and who assuredly will bring to pass the desire of those who trust and fear Him. This God has said "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."

This is the only word for God to speak. God has never said—He never will say—that there is a blessing for any one away from Himself; He will not encourage His creatures to trust in something else than Himself. It is not His will that any creature, any earthly brother, or any earthly substance should be our trust, for He would not have us deceived in our trust; and so

we are further warned concerning the man who trusteth in man that "He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."

There is then a "good that cometh." There are good things now, in respect of which there is a continual fulfilment of this word—from day to day and from hour to hour. It is not the mere *prospect* of good which is held out to us. It is a present enjoyment, a present joy to which we are called. *Now* there cometh good continually; and every word which cometh from God speaking of God,—everything that is a testimony from God, whether an event of His providence, or a manifestation of His Spirit,—eeerything that comes forth from God, showing us God, comes as *a good.* To every such good, the man who is making flesh his arm is blind. It comes as no good to him. The *very Gospel makes him unhappy.* He has no heart for it. The very setting forth of God's love disturbs his peace: the more you dwell on the freeness and

all-sufficiency of Christ's salvation, the more uncomfortable you make him. He has no eye to see the good that cometh in your words, and so in the midst of plenty he starveth; in the midst of the refreshing showers of God's grace and love he is in the desert—in a parched land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

I ask you to look at the picture here set before you—a man trusting in God, and whose hope God is; one who has a heart to feel; having various affections; formed not to be indifferent to anything going on about him, but to be affected by all; not a stock nor a stone, but a feeling, thinking, living man,—a man conscious of being continually exposed either to have pain inflicted on him or to receive pleasure; who yet

is not looking with fear on any of the visible things by which he has been wounded, nor with hope to any of the visible things which have given him pleasure; but who in spite of the associations of experience is, as regards his own prospects, looking simply and directly to God.

I beseech you consider this man. He understands that such and such things can create pain, for he has felt pain from them; that such and such treatment can cause grief, for he has been grieved by it; that such and such other things can create pleasure, for he has had pleasure in them: he knows as matter of experience that such power has been in these things in time past, and therefore, that it may be in them in time to come. But when it was in them in time past, he knows that it was God who put it in them—yea, that the power was of God alone: and therefore, in all his expectations, he looks not to the things, but to God Himself.

Oh my friends, would that we knew the glory

which such a one is giving to God!—the worship, the living worship, which such a trust contains. Nothing less than this is the perfect acknowledgment of God. And I wish you to see the difference between the man who, surrounded by circumstances which touch him at every point, and affect him in a thousand ways, is continually balancing them with each other, and thinking how they will work, and the man who, equally surrounded by these things and equally sensitive to them, is not dependent on them at all, but is looking upward and thinking of God.

"And whose hope the Lord is." This shows us that all the happiness of man must be of the nature of hope. It is not according to the will of God, nor is it according to our own nature, to say 'this moment belongs to us and we know nothing of that which is to come.' We are created to look forward; we are formed to know that there is a Being who governs us, that there is a plan evolving, and that there are things yet to come to pass which are important

to us. And therefore when we trust God it is a trust for something yet to come. It is a *present* trust and a *present* joy, but it is also a *hope*. The present is always passing away before we have well felt it—it is always slipping from beneath us; but the thing men look to is futurity; and this is the condition of the man who trusts in God, that *his hope* is *the Lord*.

Observe what this means. It is not merely that this man does not live to present things, neither does he live to future things: he does not look to circumstances present or future, but to God. That is the only real confidence. To think that there is anything sure or steadfast except God is to believe a lie. The earth is not permanent under our feet; the sun is not permanent in the firmament. There has been a time when things were not as they are; and a time cometh when it will be said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Nothing is stable in itself but the mind of God; but we, when trusting in the flesh, think that all things about us have more or less a firmness.

Now the man, here pronounced blessed, not merely as to the present but in regard to all futurity, has to do with God Himself. The reason of his hope is, that 'such is God:' not such and such are his friends, his circumstances and his possessions; but such is the character of the Lord God.

It is further said of this man "He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her root by the river;" that river is the good-will, the love of God. As the mind of God comes forth in God's actions, he is continually receiving from the waters of this river. The picture sets before us a tree planted by a running stream, receiving continual nourishment from the water of the stream, so as to be made independent of the vicissitudes of the weather, compared with a tree which by long continuance of drought is parched and withered. The one depends on the weather for the sap which nourishes it, the other does not: this is a picture of the difference between the man whose happiness depends upon ever-changing circumstances, and he whose

blessedness is derived from the unchanging God. And our God, who calls us to live by the ever-flowing stream of His own love, calls us to know that love in the greatness of the calling where-with He hath called us, that we should be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." To call us to such a hope is indeed after the manner of the love which the Father hath bestowed upon us. We have not seen Christ; and though we may have some faint notion what it is to be like Him in whom the glories of the Eternal Godhead shine forth in human nature: yet how faint it must be. But we know, that when He appears, we shall be like Him. Therefore the thing in store for us is this: this is the blessing, whatever it means; even all that is in these words, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,"—a higher portion assuredly than belongs to the angelic hosts, the highest bliss of created beings.

And of this inheritance we have now an earnest. Though "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," yet are they revealed to us by the Spirit, when the Spirit taketh of the things which are Christ's, and showeth them unto us, and enableth us to dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

AN EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER I. 5-11.

THE Apostle had set forth in the previous verses the great doctrine that God has given to us in Christ Jesus all things pertaining to life and godliness, and that the form in which this is given is that of exceeding great and precious promises; in order that by these we should be partakers of the divine nature. After having set forth the things revealed in Christ, he considers how it is, in what particular condition of living it is, that we become partakers of these. The fulness that is in Christ is one thing; the actual enjoyment of that fulness by me personally is another. The 5th, 6th, and 7th verses contain an exhortation given by the Apostle, in the knowledge that in complying with it we shall

be receiving of that fulness; that obedience to the exhortation is the condition in which the fulness which is in Christ flows into us.

"Giving all diligence." The first thing on which he fixes our attention is this, that the Christian life is an active life,—one which contains in it a continual call for watchfulness and activity. It is not a condition of mere repose or of simple receiving; but there will be a continued activity connected with that receiving. A demand upon the whole man, upon the whole time of the whole man, is implied in the word "all," "giving all diligence."

"Add to your faith virtue."

The person exhorted is supposed to be 'in the faith'—believing the promises, seeing them to be the true sayings of God, and contemplating them as realities. Being in this condition, he is called upon to add to his faith "virtue;" that is, resoluteness. Add to the faith of the promises a firm purpose, to live according to that which you are believing. Let the knowledge of the things which God has revealed take in your

minds the shape of a determined purpose to be conformed to what you know.

Resolutions, simply as such, are most fallacious; and the expectation of accomplishing anything in the strength of resolutions will always deceive us. But still our purpose of serving God's will, to be accomplished in God's strength, is to be *a purpose;* and there is to be in it a boldness, a courageous boldness. 'Virtue' involves the bringing before ourselves, and realising to ourselves, great hindrances in the way of our living according to the truth of God; and implies a readiness to count *all things* but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. It is not a mere resolution; but a resoluteness which implies the encountering, the *intentional* encountering of difficulty.

Add to "virtue knowledge."

Faith implies knowledge, but the knowledge we are to add after we have faith and whilst cherishing virtue, cannot be the same thing with what was at first revealed to our faith. By "knowledge" is here meant being in light as

to the details of the Christian life. There is to be a painstaking to know these details in connection with our own circumstances; not merely a vague general determination to encounter whatever may be before us.

Add to "knowledge temperance."

The next thing necessary to our serving God, after being advanced in knowledge, is self-denial.

Temperance is the controlling and restraining of the natural man. By temperance I do not understand simply that we should avoid what is in itself evil, but also that we should be contented to give up some things which are in themselves not evil; for instance, the love of father, mother, sister or child, and many other things in themselves right, from which notwithstanding we are to keep ourselves loose and disengaged, as feeling that there is another and a higher call upon us.

When God would have us to serve Him and to offer to Him the reasonable sacrifice of a life devoted to Him, He is not merely teaching us to distinguish between things good and evil, but

to distinguish among things that are good; He is teaching us the subordination of some things to other things; that we may choose among them and give the right place to the highest—that we may make up our minds not to live to ourselves in any thing which God has given us; but ever to hear a higher call upon us than that of mere enjoyment, and ever be ready to meet that call.

"And to temperance patience."

It is here implied that the Christian will have not only to act and to surrender but to *endure.* We are warned against expecting any exemption from the appointment of God that man must suffer. We cannot serve God in this dark day, which is the hour and power of darkness, unless we add patience to our temperance; unless we be content not only to deny ourselves but to endure actual suffering.

"And to patience godliness."

My dear friends, if this were an enumeration of things to be added to each other *after a lapse of time,* taking up a series of days and hours,

then it would follow that godliness was removed to a considerable distance, in point of time, from faith. But you are not thus to conceive of the Apostle's teaching; he enumerates these things one after another in order that our minds may discriminate and rightly know them. You are not to think of them as successive stages in your progress, like so many mile-stones on the road. It is not that after cultivating one of these characteristics of the divine life, you are to go on to another; but that this is the order in which they are connected; the one leading to and increasing the other.

What is godliness? Godliness is the living to God in anything, it matters not what. And we are here taught that it is when we are cherishing patience, patiently enduring any painful thing that comes from God, that we shall see God in that thing. The impatient man is continually in ignorance of that 'secret of the Lord' which is in everything which comes from the Lord; while the patient man will with open face see God in all things. The event which

calls for patience, if it produce irritation and dissatisfaction; if the person feel as if it were an evil which he desires to be quit of, will never speak to him of God: but if in the details of Christian experience he possess his soul in patience—if he be peacefully waiting and contemplating God's acting in it all, then is he adding to his patience godliness.

We lose the benefit of our patience, unless patience becomes a step to godliness. It is impossible to be godly without being patient; but it is quite possible to be patient without being godly: and the thing here taught is, that we are not to regard knowledge, temperance, and patience as the great things which God desires to see in us, but to know that these are to be cherished chiefly because they are the atmosphere in which godliness can exist. We are to value them, not so much for their own sake, as because while thus dwelling in the knowledge of what God calls us to; while thus resolute, self-denying, and patient, we can rise up to God from the midst of outward circumstances

which but for these things would shut out God. By adding patience, temperance, and knowledge, and boldness to the faith of God's promises, we get quit, as it were, of all the outward things which form impediments to our enjoying God. If we are brought into the experience of what is here described, then we have created for ourselves, so to speak, a transparency in all things, so that through them we can see God and can perceive that no situation contains in itself any real reason why we should not in it give glory to God, and rejoice in Him. There are indeed many situations which tend to prevent our rejoicing in God, because they have in them a tendency to shut out God; but our patience and our temperance and our knowledge and resolution will neutralize this evil, and in the midst of such circumstances we shall thus be prepared to glorify and to rejoice in God.

"To patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness." Mark the arrangement here. It is not said, add to patience brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness godliness;

but 'add to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness;' teaching us that it is when we mount up out of our circumstances to God, that we are in a condition to descend again upon our brethren of men, in the spirit of love; that it is when we see God in all things that we can exercise brotherly kindness. Just conceive the case of one who through patient endurance of hostility is enabled peacefully to ascend to God; what is the result of his so ascending? It is that he sees those who have injured him in the light of God's forgiveness, of God's forbearance; he sees the love of God towards them unquenched by all that tends to quench it; and thus raised up to God he is prepared to descend upon them with the very mind and feeling of God. Still the Apostle does not leave this to be a matter of course, but makes it an injunction; and whenever a command is given we are to know that a command is needed. And we see why the command was needed here. It is quite possible to have so ascended up to God, and yet not actually so to come down

in love to our brethren; therefore the Apostle says, you are not to be satisfied with contemplating the love wherewith God regards man, but to know that God demands of you that same love to man. To be in circumstances in which a right feeling ought next to follow, and that that feeling should *actually* follow are different things; and therefore the Apostle says, be not satisfied with entering into the mind of God, in His thoughts for man; but be partakers in those thoughts, and look yourselves upon your fellow-men in brotherly kindness.

"And to brotherly kindness, charity."

Mark, I entreat you, that I am not making distinctions where God has not made them. What is meant by godliness is not simply love to God: it is the acknowledgment of Him *as God;* it is seeing His sovereignty—it is seeing that He is God. And thus brotherly kindness is not simply love to men. It is the peculiar character which love takes from the circumstance that they are my brethren It is love springing from the acknowledgment of a bond.

When I have ascended to God and look to Him from whom are all, I feel what it is to be linked to all around me by a unity of nature and condition. This is properly speaking brotherly love, but it is not the same as charity; and I entreat you to mark that charity is given as the last thing.

"God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." While love to God in us will be godliness, and love to man in us will be brotherly love, there is a principle which is properly *love itself;* which has not the distinctive characters either of godliness or of brotherly kindness; which does not recognise in its object either superiority or equality, but is simply and purely *love:* and it is this which is placed last. It is up to this that we are brought by other things.

Not that they cease when this is reached; but that it exists along with them, and grows out from them, being in itself the participation in the divine nature. All the various ties by which God binds us together, have in them an appro-

priate love: but *this* love is above the love which a father bears to his child, a son to his father, a brother to his sister, a husband to his wife. Above all these is that comprehensive charity, which is higher than all; not contradicting the others, but comprehending them in itself.

This is our calling, to partake of that mind in God out of which creation sprang, and which is therefore before creation; out of which brotherly love arises, and which is therefore above and beyond brotherly love: that which, had there been no creation, no brethren, no relative connexions, could have originated all good things. Of course, like all the rest, it is in us a derived thing coming to us from God; but not the less is it intended to be in us.

Do not think it too much for you to expect to be able to distinguish, as St. Peter distinguished, between these conceptions of love. When we see the Apostles moving among the deep things of the Spirit as persons at home, and understanding what they speak of, we are not to say, 'They understand, but we cannot hope

to understand, these distinctions.' Do not be satisfied with knowing that so many things are to be added to faith, without understanding exactly what is meant; but know rather that you are called to receive the same Spirit who enabled the Apostles so to write, knowing what they wrote, in order that you may read, and rightly understanding what you read, may glorify God in it.

"For if these things be in you, and abound; they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My dear friends, mark how continually every word of instruction, admonition, and exhortation in the epistles, recognises the condition of living to God as the condition into which God desires to bring us, in giving us Christ; so that if *that* is not accomplished in any one nothing is accomplished. If these things be abounding in you, *then* is the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ bearing that fruit in you which it was intended to bear.

But more is here said than this. We are not merely taught that such is the fruit and such the result which God desires, but also that the way in which the knowledge of Christ becomes fruitful in us, is by our obeying this command. I know how easily men confound such an admonition as this with the mere advice to behave themselves well in all the relations of life. But remember how very spiritual these commands are, and how very much obedience to them belongs to the inward man. It is not that you are to add such and such outward deeds of conduct to your faith; that which is enjoined is altogether a spiritual and an inward thing. When this knowledge goes forth upon the inward man, moulding and fashioning and changing it, and creating us anew after the image of Christ—when beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit—*it is in this process* that we are made to be "not barren or un-

fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

The person who is in the faith is in the light. The Apostle had commanded them to *add* "these things" *to their faith;* and he now declares that if these things be not added to faith, faith is extinguished. It is not that faith continues, although the fruit is not there; but that faith is a living principle only whilst going forth in living power from the man; and that the resisting of this living power is the extinguishing of the life itself. There is an inseparable connection between our turning to practical account the vision of God's promises, and our abiding in that vision; between our yielding to the influence of what God has revealed, and our abiding in the light of what He has revealed; between our resisting the influence of what God reveals, and our coming to be ignorant that He has revealed it. There is in our cherishing the

knowledge and yielding ourselves to its power, that which keeps us in the knowledge; and there is in our disobedience to the light that which shuts it out, so that in fact it becomes darkness. It is not merely true that some men reject the light altogether, and therefore *abide* in darkness; but it is also true that the individual who has come to know the light may be, and often is found, in particular instances and in respect of particular light, resisting and rejecting it; and in so far as this resistance goes, he becomes blind and cannot see afar off. The person who is seeing the light, and turning it to account and profiting by it, receives at every step of the Christian life, additional light from God; while he who resists any light and refuses to walk in it, comes to be in darkness. This is true, not merely in regard to the great division of men into believers and unbelievers, but it is true of every particle of light which God gives us, and in respect of the use which those who have known God make of every light which God sets before them.

"And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

To say that he is blind and cannot see afar off and to say that he has forgotten the purgation of his sins, is substantially the same thing; because it is in remembering that we are purged from our old sins that we dwell in the light. Therefore the person who is blind, not discerning the truth of things, not entering into the mind of God, is just the person who is not dwelling in the light of the cross of Christ, and who is not seeing things as they are revealed by the shedding of the blood of Christ. The glory of the cross is in this, that if we are beholding it, we are fruitful; if not, we are unfruitful. The glory of the cross does not consist in this, that a person who has once seen the cross shall be always fruitful, whether he be dwelling in the light that shines from it, or be shutting it out; but in this, that there is an inseparable connection between our being at any moment in the light of the character of God as revealed in the cross, and our living to the glory of God. That

we may shut out this light, and cease to live to the glory of God, is true: but this interferes not with the glory of the cross; for had we abode in the light of it, we should have lived to the glory of God.

And now the Apostle, having taught us that he who adds to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity, will be fruitful, and that he who does not will be blind, warns us against being blind in these remarkable words; "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

This is an address to persons *knowing* their calling and election of God, and now in the condition of living to the glory of God. It is an exhortation to them to give diligence to make this condition steadfast, sure, permanent. It is not therefore a command to do something in

order to be taken into the number of the elect, as it has sometimes been ignorantly held to mean.

"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

I believe that just in the same way in which a person dead to the perception of God and His goodness, may lull himself into security by the thought that all is fixed; so, one who once rejoiced in the light of God's goodness, and had once escaped from "the corruption that is in the world," may, at seasons, while forgetting the blood and the teaching of Christ, become "blind" again; and that while the reality of the divine life is, as it were, dead within him, yet the memory of his former experience may arise in such a shape as to give a feeling of security which is altogether carnal, and which becomes the cause of his continuing dead to God and to goodness. The preservative against such a state of things, is in the words "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." And that which such a man is taught to recall is not his former experience, but the fact that God is the same God now

as He was then; and his consolation is to come from recovering his sight and being made again to see afar off, through the power of Christ working in him. If any one takes comfort from the doctrine of the "perseverance of saints," when he himself is not living to the glory of God, it must be a delusion and a snare. To a man who is dwelling in the light, the knowledge that he may trust Christ with perfect confidence as to his continuing in the light, is not merely comfortable, but is absolutely needful to peace. Unless we could trust Christ with the future, at the time we are dwelling in the light, our joy in the light would be of short continuance; and I believe that such trust for the future will be felt to be easily and naturally connected with this word, "if you do these things you will never fall;" for in such a season the soul will be given up truly, into the hands of Christ, to have these things wrought in it.

It is very grievous to see any who have once rejoiced in the love and holiness of God, afterwards preserving some measure of peace, not

from dwelling in the vision of God's love and holiness, but from the habit of thinking of themselves as God's chosen ones. And I feel that much jealousy is called for, that our peace be indeed the peace of God, and not that which arises from our having formerly tasted of His love. Regard yourselves, I entreat you, as a sacred trust; see your spirits and bodies bought with the blood of Christ; and be jealous lest any taint of sin come upon them, while they ought, as belonging to Christ, to be continually pure. Let not any consciousness of grieving the Spirit of God be a light thing. Let it not be a light thing that when in Christ there is such provision for your being pure you should present such a broken, interrupted service to God.

See, I beseech you, the fulness of the provision which in Christ belongs to you, without a single hair's-breadth of distance between you and that provision. God has not only given to all liberty to come to Him, but also power to come. And what is the power? It is power to come out of ignorance of what God is, into the

light of what God is. This is what is meant by saying that through Christ there is provision for our entering into the mind and feelings of God.

To enter into the mind of God is to share it. In every sympathy with God of which Christ was conscious when He was here on earth, and of which He is eternally conscious—in every such sympathy He is able to make you sympathise and to make it a like reality in you.

My dear friends, in considering these truths of God and applying them to ourselves, we should never for one moment forget that we are in the flesh, that we are always tempted to judge spiritual things after the natural man; and that we need a present vision of God to see things truly. If we are in present blindness or darkness as to God, that very fact ought to be connected in our minds with an exceeding jealousy of all the judgments in our minds during that darkness. A dark ignorant feeling of earnestness about our salvation, however honest and sincere, will not accomplish salvation for us. A man *hopes* such a feeling will do: he

is not, he cannot be sure that it will do. When he allows himself an hour of serious consideration, he finds that he is standing on a quicksand, and has no sure footing. He is without certainty; he is not dwelling in the light; he is not dwelling in peace; he is not able to commit all futurity to the Lord his God; he is not free from carefulness though he be sincere. Of any one who knows not the provision which there is in Christ as a reality for himself, it must be said that he is not, and cannot be, prepared to meet the Judge who standeth at the door.

AN ESCAPE FROM LOVE.

"AND the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."*

If I were to select any expression from the Bible as characteristic of the great object of my teaching, it would be this verse. My great object has been to direct your hearts into the love of God. Whether in doing so I have been drawing you away from the truth of God, let that man answer who has been taught to know the meaning of this word "God is love," and to know that "love" is the "fulfilling of the law,"—the entire meeting of God's demand from man. Such a man knows that love is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end; because Jesus Christ is the Alpha

* 2 Thessalonians, iii. 5.

and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end; because Jesus Christ is God who is love, manifested in order to transform us into the same love, and to create in us that mind which was in God from eternity, which was in Christ when on earth, and which will be in the members of His body through all eternity. To "direct your hearts into the love of God" is, I conceive, the object for which God was manifested in the flesh, and the object of all those sufferings to which He submitted—sufferings to which we have no key, unless we see that Christ is God, and that God is love.

Let no one understand the love of God as if it were not also true that God is righteous. But how can you know God's righteousness, how can you know what He rejects, and what it is that He would draw towards Himself, unless you know that He is love? It is written, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, *and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*" How can you know God's unchangeable

truth, unless you know that what He has pronounced a blessing on is love, and that it is on enmity that the curse rests—the enmity which makes a man stand far off from God, and seek to stand above his fellow-men? And why does He put His curse on enmity? Just because 'He is love.'

What is the meaning of that trust in God which is pleasing to Him? Is it to power that we trust? Is it to strength? Is it to a Being who is mightier than we, and of whom therefore we are afraid, because He could destroy us? Homage springing from such apprehensions of His power God acknowledges not. It is offering Him an insult; for it is saying, 'If I *could* be independent, I would not depend on Him.' What, then, is trust in God? It is not merely trembling because He is stronger than we. To trust in God is to repose on the bosom of infinite love.

I am anxious to impress upon you that there is no one part of God's acting, from the beginning to the end, which any one can have a right

apprehension of who does not know that God is love.

Men say in their blindness, in their sinful enmity to God, and in their anxiety to enjoy a happiness apart from God, that He does all things for His own glory, that for His glory He makes one man miserable and another man happy, and they have thus invented a doctrine whereby they make the living God, the fountain of living waters, to be a fountain which at the same time sends forth sweet waters and bitter. Man never declared a more certain truth than this, that God has done all things for His own glory. But we must know what the glory of God is, before we can understand what we are saying, when we use such language as that His own glory is the object of God's acting. "Glory" is neither more nor less than the manifestation of excellence. It must be *an excellence* that comes forth, otherwise it is no "glory." And what is that excellent thing in God, the manifestation of which is His glory? It is this, that God is love.

It is true that God does everything for His own glory, but what shall we say of that word when used as men often use it? It is the invention of the sinful heart for the purpose of screening itself from the full blaze of God's love, and behind this screen enjoying some peace away from God. No man can live under the feeling that every attribute of God tells one tale, and that that God desires to bless him; no man can live under the feeling that this is true, not only of himself, but of every child of Adam, without experiencing a mighty and constraining power, in this habitual apprehension of God, causing his heart to rise towards Him in praise and thanks. But from experiencing the power of this manifestation of love, men seek to escape. They will not deny that God is love, but they will throw God's love to a distance; they cast a mist around it, and so reduce themselves to the condition of seeing no certain proof that God loves them. They give a full circle to every attribute in the Godhead but love. They do not limit God's justice, or His holi-

ness, or His truth: all these they admit to be of universal extent: how is it that they will not extend in like manner the love of God, and while they make a complete circle of each of His other attributes, make this attribute but a part of a circle? The secret is this: it is not God's justice, or holiness or truth, that is the instrument of convincing a sinner of his sin, and of forcing him out of his sin, and bringing him, back to God: it is *God's love* alone that does this. No man can realise that God so loved him, as to give His only-begotten Son for him, and that by the death of His Son God has taken away his condemnation, and is not now imputing sin to him—no man can realise this love, and not be reconciled to God.

The healing, the blessing, the saving of man consists in his heart being directed into the love of God; and therefore it is that God has revealed Himself to His sinful creatures as putting away their sins by the shedding of the blood of Christ, who is God in our nature; so that there is no barrier between them and

God, any more than there is between God and creatures who have never sinned; there is no reason why they should not trust in Him, and confide in Him, and love Him just as entirely as if their consciences did not reproach them with the slightest breach of His law.

I wish to bring out to you now the connection between dwelling in the love of God and entering into God's plan, in respect of the government of His creatures—the "patient waiting for Christ." The possibility of anything like happiness in the state of living without God, arises from the nature *of a day of grace.* If God does not bring immediate destruction on a creature who sins, thus dealing with sin according to its nature the moment it meets His eye, it is not because He is indifferent to evil, but because He would keep open the possibility of His creature's return to Him. But this is not to be the permanent state of things. God has not, after creating man and telling him what was good and what was evil, withdrawn and left him to choose good or evil as he pleased, without interfering in the matter,

leaving sin and holiness to work their own results. We see, indeed, that there is a tendency in evil to produce misery, and in good to produce pleasure and happiness; but it is nevertheless possible in the present state of things for a good man to be a sufferer from evil, and for a wicked man to be tasting of happiness: the connection between sin and misery is not of such a kind as would necessarily make every moment of the sinner's wickedness to be misery, or secure the being that is holy from disquietude and infelicity. We see, from the history of the world, that evil may be in high places, and that good may be the oppressed thing; that evil may be triumphing over good. Had this been according to God's ultimate plan for the world, there would have been no prospect but the desolate one of seeing evil working here and good there for ever, as from the beginning of history has been the case, the good having no power to put down the evil. It is not enough to see that God's government *tends* to the putting glory, and honour, and power, and praise on the side of goodness, and

misery and evil on the side of iniquity, while we see also the good actually oppressed. It would be impossible for our hearts to be directed into the love of God unless we had the prospect of a time coming when the wicked will no longer oppress the just, and when the good shall be separated from the evil.

It is a part of the faith in God of the children of God, that there will come a time in which this same earth, which is now a scene of darkness and rebellion, shall be filled with the glory of the Lord; and when from every part of it, even from the rising to the setting sun, incense and a pure offering shall ascend unto God.

There is a power in this faith to direct men's hearts into the love of God, for it draws away the mind from the individual personal object of our own happiness, and raises us to the idea of a God who reigneth. If my mind rests upon the idea that my own conflict will soon be over, that I shall soon be landed on the peaceful shores of eternity, a selfish character is given to my joy. I am not in this sympathising with God; or at

least I am sympathizing with only a part of His mind. I am not carried forward to the hour when not only I shall be delivered from the distress of sin, but when sin shall be swept away; when sin shall not only not oppress *me*, but when it shall not oppress the *just*.

I desire to press this distinction, and to show you that so long as your hope merely turns to the period when you shall yourselves be free, and not to the period when evil shall be put away, you are not raised up into a state in which your joys are those of Him who looks to the whole, and sees the end from the beginning, and in which your sorrows are also those of Him who looks to the whole, and sees the end from the beginning. If you anticipate a time when the glory of God shall occupy that place in man's heart which selfishness now occupies; when men shall dwell in the spirit of love to God and man, not in some distant, unknown world, but just here, on this earth where you are, you will in looking forward to such a time have a joy and consolation which are the same as God's.

There is in the human heart a tendency so to separate between the world that now is and some future world, as to feel that while in this world, we must live like the world, and that when we die, we shall be fitted for heaven if we have a title for heaven. Men do not see that heaven begins in any heart when God reigns in it, and that they are making a false separation between the present and the future. They would be delivered from this delusion, could they perceive that the present world is what it is, just because God is not acknowledged in it—is not glorified in it; and that there is no necessity for God's not being glorified on the earth, as God will show when the rightful King shall manifest His character and claim His redeemed inheritance.

It is in looking to God as *reigning* that I see what a blessed and glorious thing it is, that God is such a God, and will so reign; and that I am made to enter into the evil of rebellion against Him, and to see everything that is evil in the world as resistance to God, and everything that is good as fulfilling His purpose.

But what is meant by the "patient waiting for Christ?" Patience here is not expressive of contentedness with the present evil state of things. We should receive a great injury, if our knowledge of God's plan had the least tendency to reconcile us to the existence of any evil thing. We must see evil as that which God desires to see destroyed, otherwise we cannot feel that in praying that His kingdom may come, we are acting according to His will. The patience spoken of is not patience with sin; but patience under the personal experience of the painful consequences of sin. It is not that our hearts are not to be continually joining in the earnest cry that evil may be destroyed; but that we are to be content to suffer where Christ suffered, to be hated where Christ was hated, to be misunderstood where Christ was misunderstood.

The thought of Christ's reign casts a nothingness upon all selfish plans and expectations; but the new order of things will only destroy what is evil. That which is good will last. It is blessed to know that nothing good is short-lived; that

nothing worth keeping shall be destroyed ; that nothing which it is worth while to set a heart upon shall ever be taken from that heart; that nothing shall ever be taken away but what it is better should be taken away. If men repine at the transitory nature of the present state, it is altogether the distress of ignorance ; and if they saw things aright, instead of being sorry that life is short and uncertain, they would rejoice that the fashion of the world passeth away, and that the reign of Christ will soon come.

THE END.

00111758

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018